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Keep This Issue!

Magazines occupy a peculiar niche in the publication panoply. Not quite as disposable as newspapers, neither are they as long-lived as books. Magazines are supposed to be topical and timely; savored at leisure, they are nevertheless destined for the recycling bin.

And yet most magazine editors probably fantasize that their publications will be spared such a fate by appreciative readers. The January/February issue of *ArchitectureBoston* is an unapologetic indulgence of that fantasy. (Clue: We even anoint it with the self-important theme "Year in Review.") With its focus on recent award-winning people and places, this issue celebrates excellent work, but it also captures a moment in history. Part of the editorial fantasy includes future historians and architectural afficionados mining these pages for a better understanding of our time.

So here's a note to those future readers: You need some context. You need to know that 2004 was the year that saw the opening of the Genzyme Center — hailed as one of the most significant "green" buildings of our time — and the Stata Center — celebrated as one of the most celebrated buildings of our time. This was the year that the Pritzker family failed to consummate a deal on the Fan Pier site — twice. (This was also the year that the Institute of Contemporary Art broke ground for its new building on the edge of that site, a brave little cultural outpost in the middle of a parking tundra.) This was the year in which million-dollar condo projects sprouted all over the city, prompting worries about market tops; you will know if those worries were well-founded. This was the year of renewed distrust of public construction projects, as taxpayers heard reports of thousands of leaks in the Big Dig tunnels as well as a new threat to historic buildings in the Fort Point Channel area, where lowered groundwater levels may have endangered old wooden pilings. This was the year when Massachusetts launched another failed candidacy for president of the United States and when Boston hosted the Democratic National Convention — an event rivaled only by Y2K for its degree of hype and lack of subsequent impact.

You also need to know that this was the year that the Red Sox finally won the World Series.

What do the Red Sox have to do with architecture? Nothing and everything. The "curse" that infected Boston's sports pages for decades is nothing compared to what has had a far more insidious effect on the cultural and entrepreneurial spirit of this city. Coaches counsel their players that if they think they are losers, they will be losers. If you think you are second-rate, you will be third-rate. Trading Babe Ruth to New York was a mere historical embellishment. Boston has defined itself in terms of New York ever since it lost its mercantile preeminence as a port city in the late 1700s.

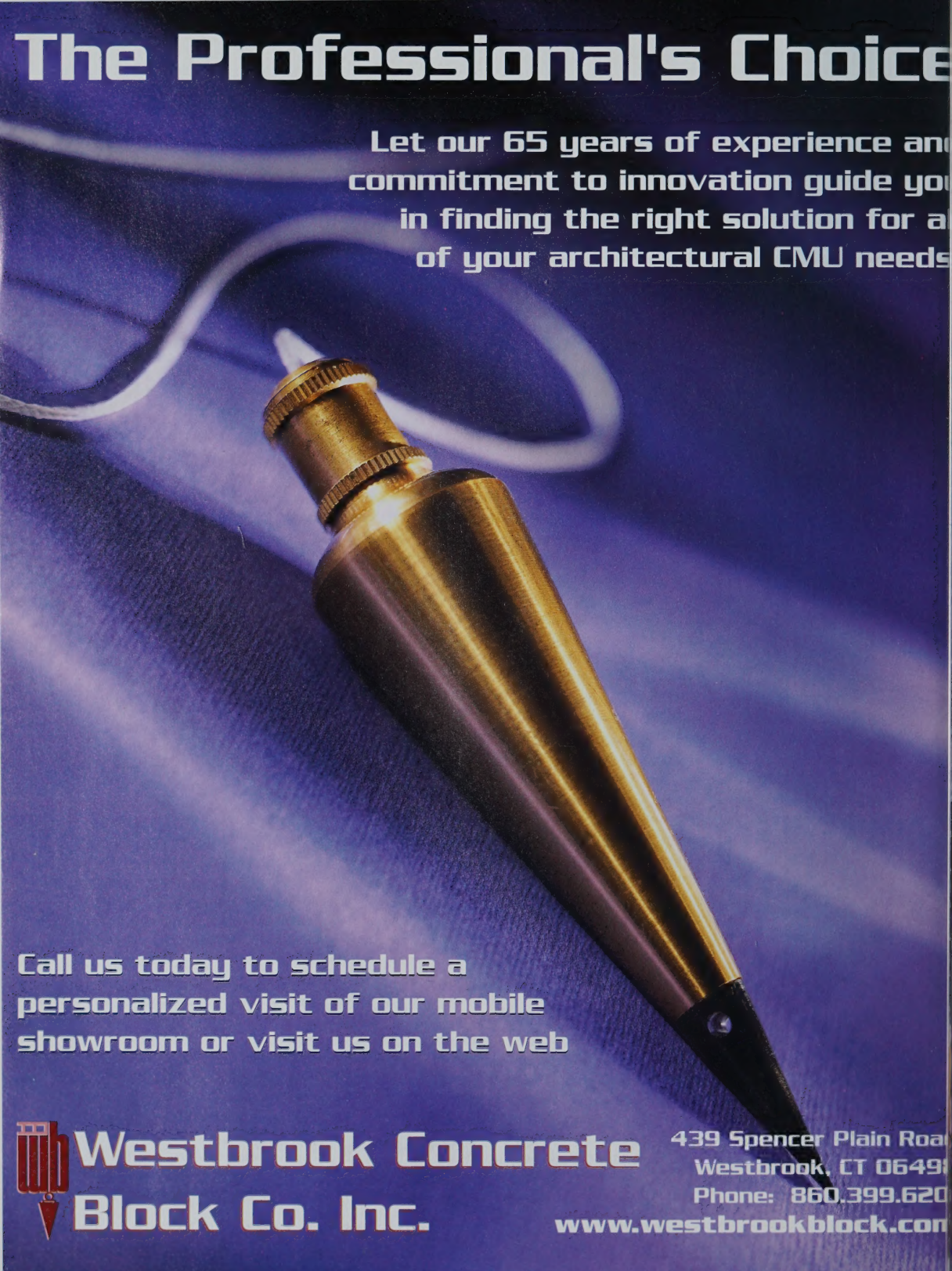
Boston has defined itself in terms of New York ever since it lost its mercantile preeminence as a port city in the late 1700s. And now is the time to stop it.

And now is the time to stop it. Boston has never looked as good or felt as vibrant as it does now. Architecture reflects the culture that builds it. The pages that follow reveal a new energy — a far more dynamic spirit than could be seen in our first "Year in Review" just four years ago. That spirit draws its strength not only from a vigorous design community, but also from the larger community of business and cultural leaders, politicians, and the public. The mantle of dowdiness and conservativism that has been draped over Boston's architecture is as clichéd and outmoded as the notion of 60-year-olds in rocking chairs and 86-year-old curses. Boston is an international powerhouse of design talent — much of it unrecognized on home turf because so much work is exported to other parts of the world. What accounts for this success? Boston's architects have managed to avoid most of the folly of fashion, pursuing instead the more worthy goals of respectful invention and thoughtful innovation. After all, magazines may be disposable, but architecture is not. ■

Elizabeth S. Padjen FAIA
Editor

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This page: Genzyme Center. Architects: Behnisch, Behnisch & Partner with Next Phase Studio.

Opposite: Ray and Maria Stata Center for Computer, Information and Intelligence Sciences. Architect: Gehry Partners, LLP.



THE SCIENTIFIC STUDIO:

Building the architecture of discovery

BY JAMES McCOWN

"A city of intellectual capital" — nothing so epitomizes Boston's concept of itself. In New York they shuffle money, in Los Angeles they make movies, in Houston they drill for oil. But in Boston we think, experiment, and invent.

So it's not surprising that an architectural mythology would develop around all of this putative brainpower. In the 1940s, Edward Land set up shop in industrial East Cambridge and proceeded to reinvent photography. In the 1970s, entrepreneur An Wang moved his company into an abandoned mill building in Lowell and began to change the way information was produced and processed. But the grandmother of all high-tech wombs was MIT's Building 20, built as a "temporary" structure during World War II to serve as the Institute's radiation laboratory. For more than half a century, quirky geeks toiled away in the makeshift structure, waiting for a spark of inspiration that might alter the course of science and industry.

In 1998, with great fanfare, MIT held a sort of architectural wake for Building 20, before razing it to make way for the Ray and Maria Stata Center for Computer, Information and Intelligence Sciences. Completed in the spring of 2004, the Frank Gehry–designed Stata Center represented an important juncture in Boston architecture. Like Stefan Behnisch's Genzyme Headquarters just blocks away in Kendall Square, it was a completed work by an important global "celebrity" architect. With these buildings, went the conventional wisdom, Boston had finally shaken off the dowdy conservatism that had marked its building design zeitgeist for more than a generation. But the two buildings also marked a wholesale acceptance of the notion that scientific discovery — and its concomitant collaboration, interaction, and risk — should directly inform the layout and morphology of the architecture in which the research takes place.

Among the great champions of this new architectural paradigm was MIT President Charles Vest. At the dedication of the

Stata Center, he took pains to point out that while the iconic neo-Classical buildings represented the Institute's public image, Building 20 was its "soul." At the twilight of a tenure that saw the largest building boom in MIT history, Vest made it clear that Stata was the spiritual descendent of Building 20, not of the sternly regimented Ionic columns and grandiose domes designed by William Bosworth and his collaborators from 1913 to 1937.

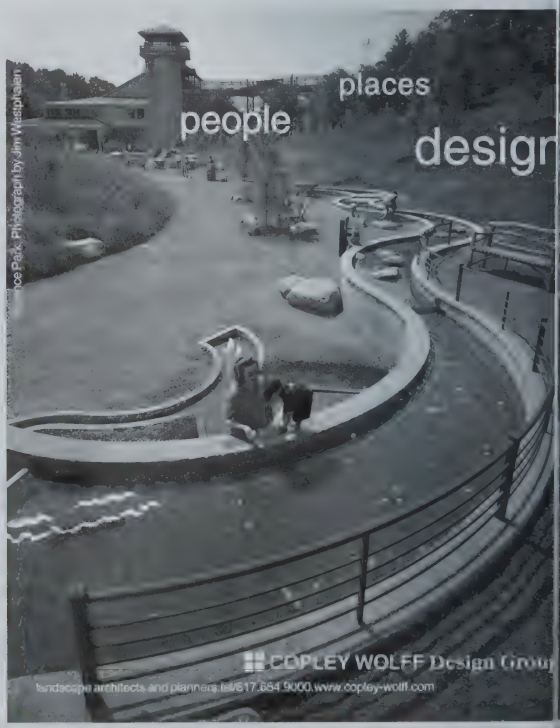
Constructed at the height of the Gilded Age, the Bosworth buildings were conceived as science and commerce triumphant. A rigid, almost militaristic symmetry would enclose the landscape. A pantheon of grandees would march across the somber façades, with the six-letter DARWIN and NEWTON names evenly balanced along the penultimate frieze positions, like gatekeepers to some Valhalla of discovery and technology. In the post-World War II era, the culture of MIT, without skipping a beat, incorporated high Modernism into the campus with buildings by Eero Saarinen, I.M. Pei, and Alvar Aalto.

Gehry's building represents a virtual 180-degree turn away from this rationalism that has always been at the core of MIT architecture. Scientific inquiry requires a rigid application of rules unalloyed by the caprice and spontaneity afforded the visual arts and humanities. But caprice and spontaneity are at the very heart of Gehry's work. What he has done at Stata is to throw rationalism to the wind, reminding us that the inspired scribble and the whisper of the muse are as much a part of the scientific process as test tubes. The exterior façades contort and twist, but so do the interior volumes. A professor's office purposefully thrusts into an adjacent hallway; a bridge allows a voyeuristic view into a lecture hall. Cafés and informal seating areas abound. This is architecture purposefully in the service of human intellectual interaction.

Contrasted with Stata's arresting curb appeal, Behnisch's Genzyme headquarters is unremarkable on the exterior. Indeed it is a very conservative building architecturally, and a marked departure from the free-form work that Behnisch has done in Germany and Britain. The main façade reads like a collage of American high Modernism: a little Gordon Bunshaft here, a little Kevin Roche there, a bit of Hugh Stubbins thrown in for good measure.

But the inside is another story altogether. Anyone who thinks the central "atrium" is a tired cliché needs to visit this building. The soaring central space is so luminous and inviting that it's hard to take in the entire scene at once. As at Stata, there is an almost extravagant amount of space given over to informal seating areas. Collaborating on the interiors with Next Phase Studio, Behnisch suspended small cafés and meeting areas within the central void and furnished them with jaunty mid-20th-century furniture in vibrant reds and oranges. "Linear chandeliers" that hang from skylights are composed of tiny mirrors that throw shards of light here and there. As if to enlist the building in a show of corporate





egalitarianism, Chairman Henri Termeer's office is not off in some hushed and sequestered corner, but right in the center of the action — adjacent to the company cafeteria.

And yet the interaction is on wildly different terms than at Stata. For all its notoriety as Gehry's first major Boston academic project, Stata is a remarkably open and unintimidating place. The public seems free to come in and explore as it likes, with nary a hassling security guard in sight. At Genzyme, by contrast, there is an almost scary amount of surveillance and control, both seen and unseen. Barriers appear from nowhere when the requisite card or credentials are not presented. Elevators seem to skip certain floors at will, no explanation offered. The smiling guards and receptionists are eerily polite and solicitous. The whole security setup is made vaguely sinister by the fact that it tries to be unobtrusive.

Genzyme has received a lot of favorable publicity for the green, sustainable aspects of the Behnisch building, and indeed it has raised the bar in terms of the quality of employee workspace and environmental responsibility. And yet the architecture profession needs to ask a tough question of both itself and its clients: What happens when LEED accreditation is no longer a big deal? Will companies continue to bear the extra costs of sustainable design when they're no longer being publicly applauded for it?

In a similar vein of skepticism, MIT's idea of architectural form as a stimulant to creativity has its critics. Some insist that it was precisely the bare and unexciting nature of Building 20 — its "anti-architecture" — that made it so compelling. In an essay in *The Architecture of Science* (MIT Press, 1999), Robert Venturi harked back to the proverbial New England mill building as "neutral, recessive architecture" that can be easily retrofitted to accommodate the constantly changing needs of research. Its brilliance is in its blankness.

"Artists' studios are in [industrial] lofts not essentially because artists are poor, but because they feel they can't create a masterpiece in someone else's masterpiece," Venturi wrote.

For the German philosopher G.W.F. Hegel, both science and architecture were inextricably bound up with the historical moment. Stata and Genzyme have afforded Boston a moment that is new and bracing, as the region's most important industries — technology and life sciences — are wedded in a sense to great design.

And yet there is something vaguely deterministic about the whole "fostering creativity" enterprise. We have yet to see whether these spaces will turn out to be great cradles of creativity, or whether they will more resemble an overattentive mother convinced that piping Mozart into the nursery will produce a musical prodigy. ▪

James McCown is the director of marketing and communications at Schwartz/Silver Architects in Boston. He writes about architecture and real estate for regional publications.





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CONSIDERED Opinion

Robert Campbell FAIA, recipient, 2004 BSA Award of Honor, talks with Christopher Lydon

Robert Campbell FAIA is the recipient of the 2004 Boston Society of Architects Award of Honor. He has been the architecture critic of *The Boston Globe* since 1973 and won the 1996 Pulitzer Prize for Criticism. With photographer Peter Vanderwarker, he is the author of *Cityscapes of Boston*. A fellow of the American Institute of Architects and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, he has also received the AIA Medal for criticism. His poems have appeared in publications including *The Atlantic Monthly* and *Harvard Review*.

Christopher Lydon is a self-described "professional question-asker and straight-man." He covered presidential politics for *The New York Times* in the 1970s, hosted public television's *Ten O'Clock News* in the 1980s, founded *The Connection* on public radio in the 1990s, and is combining broadcast and Web sensibilities in his new network program with Public Radio International. He was a school-reform candidate for mayor of Boston in 1993, and a public board member of the BSA.

Christopher Lydon I'd love to hear the list of Bob Campbell's five favorite buildings in contemporary Boston, and his five least favorite — if only to give people a baseline marker of Bob Campbell's taste.

Robert Campbell You're asking me to play the game that converts a work of architecture into a work of art and makes it understandable as an isolated object. But buildings, at least in cities, are always part of a larger collection, always in some kind of dialogue with one another. So best/worst lists trouble me as a way of thinking about architecture. If I were telling somebody where to see the greatest piece of architecture in Boston, I would say, walk

"Head of Apollo, Florence," photograph by Peter Vanderwarker (2000)

Apollo was the god of light, music, poetry, prophecy, and intellectual inquiry.

down Mount Vernon Street to Louisburg Square. That is an extraordinary experience which you can't have in any other American city.

Christopher Lydon Is the Zakim Bridge the new mark of the town? If so, what does it tell us?

Robert Campbell It tells us that we were willing to waste money on an entirely impractical ornament that we all immediately loved. And I'm all for it. We should do much more of that. I think that architecture is so much more than function. Mary Catherine Bateson, Margaret Mead's daughter, said that her mother believed that food is not about nutrients — food is a kind of work of art that you create in a society with friends that embodies rituals of family and holiday. I think that's a marvelous image, food versus nutrients. In the same way, architecture is very different from a building that is only functional.

Christopher Lydon What does the bridge tell us about our direction?

The Screened Porch

A chorus upon the pure
formal fling of myself
projectile, arrow, bird
on the axis of the world
out of the dark and brown
bookshelved living room,
the catapulting feet
tiny, naked, pounding
the Navaho rugs, the call
of gulls, the shuffle of oaks,
the blade of threshold brass,
the porch air bright and warm,
smell of the sun, a figure
shadowy on the swing
or creaking in the wicker,
the smash through the screen door,
the stone path chilly, the pierce
of acorns, the downward leap
through the wall and the hot steps,
the pale and yielding sand,
the lake, the far dissolving
horizon of New York State,
the screen door slam behind.

— Robert Campbell

(first published, *The Atlantic Monthly*, February 1994)

Robert Campbell Well, the bridge is unique. Everything else that the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority has done, with the exception of many nice parks, is hideous. It's based on the unfortunate assumption that when you're in the tunnel you're no longer in the world, so nobody should have to think about what the experience is like. And so we have black ceilings and black walls with wires strung out along the side in order to save a couple hundred million dollars. A couple hundred million dollars is nothing out of $15 billion, but it's the appearance of things that we cut. And there's a larger problem: all the engineering was done for those tunnels before the architects began to look at them, and of course that should have been done at the same time in a coordinated way.

Christopher Lydon Isn't the refilling of the old downtown artery space the major challenge of the next decade?

Robert Campbell Sure it is. I don't want to knock the Turnpike Authority too much. I'm sure that everybody had a very difficult job. But so far, we're not seeing any very exciting solutions. You can't believe how this enormous space has changed the city. Suddenly, the downtown is a social collection of towers, like people at a cocktail party. It's very exciting. In retrospect, it might have been better not to think about designing the surface until after it had all come out and we could actually walk the site.

Christopher Lydon For most people, of course, it's news that there is so much space to work with, and that so much of the space is already committed to roadways. Is it too late for a second look?

Robert Campbell It's too late, yes. Everybody has tried to get involved in improving it in some way, but the Turnpike Authority is desperate to finish it up as quickly and as cheaply as possible, not to go back on decisions that have already been made. I appease myself by thinking that it took 600 years to get the Piazza San Marco to come out right.

Christopher Lydon What's the best that can happen in that space now?

Robert Campbell A lot of the land that we see there is privately owned, and those owners, I think, are going to infill those sites and reorient their buildings toward the open space. Over time, it will probably become quite lively and wonderful. Jane Jacobs pointed out long ago that parks are not always a good idea. They have to be in the right place, and they have to have the proper use, otherwise they can be dangerous. I think it's going to take some years of trying this and trying that and seeing how it works out.

Christopher Lydon I'm glad you invoked Jane Jacobs. I look out of my kitchen window in East Boston, over the ghosts of the Donald McKay shipyard and a busy tugboat dock. And what I see is a harbor metropolis of stunning variety. I see

brick warehouses and modern apartment buildings in Charlestown, the Zakim and the Tobin bridges, *Old Ironsides*' masts in the background and liquid-gas tankers plowing the foreground between me and the Old North Church and the State Street towers. It's a Boston panorama to be proud of. But get closer to any of the new construction, and what we see is that, for all the lip service to Jane Jacobs, her basic rules are more honored in the breach than the observance. The Jacobs rules were: mixed uses, human density, short blocks, and a complexity of old and new structures —

Robert Campbell Old and new, responding therefore to very different regulations.

Christopher Lydon Exactly. And to very different business opportunities. We love these rules, but where in the world do we actually see them used in practice?

Robert Campbell It's a real problem; I agree with you. Let's talk about the so-called South Boston waterfront. The problem there is our taxes are too low. We don't spend enough. So the city said to that developer, "OK, you come here and build your buildings, but you've got to put a level of parking underneath, at your expense. You're going to build the streets and put in the utilities and maintain them forever; we're not going to. And by the way, keep the buildings low because we don't like high buildings, and anyway there's the flight path from Logan."

None of those things should have happened. It's the public's responsibility to lay out the streets and the parks and the parking, and to build them and maintain them. We put so much of the onus on the private world now that we come to the point that you just raised. It's almost impossible to build the things that you and I would like to see because the developer is trying to make a buck in an impossible situation. But that's because the city is poor. Paris spends seven times as much per hectare on public open space as anywhere else in France, because Parisians see it as their window to the world. They create wonderful places everywhere, but they also have doubled the taxes. And we've got to make that choice at some point.

Christopher Lydon Let's talk about you. How did you get to be Bob Campbell? Readers know you as an "Inman Square urbanist." But, you know, there's a certain air of mystery, a mystique, about Bob Campbell.

Robert Campbell I cultivate that, of course! I grew up in Buffalo. I've never lived anywhere but in a city. I was an English major at Harvard, and I wrote my honors thesis on Dylan Thomas. And then I thought, what do you do with an English major degree? In those days it would have been very easy to be a professor of English. But the only career decision I ever really made was: I do not want to be a professor of English, so I'll be a





Eads to Glinka

it said on the back of one of the volumes of
the red encyclopedia in the bedroom
in Buffalo, defining an
incantatory spectrum. Who
was Eads? or should it be, what are
eads? Or Keats? And Glinka? Shopping bag lady
of the Grand Concourse, everybody knows Glinka?
Product, with coal and zinc,
of a European state?
Eads when I grew up I learned
was a designer of bridges.
Glinka was never the same after the war.

— Robert Campbell

(first published, *The Atlantic Monthly*, June 1996)

journalist. I took a battery of aptitude tests, and they said, "Be an architect. You're a spatial, visual person. You're bored with abstractions." I was a junior in college, and over the next five years, I found they were right about everything. I went to the Columbia School of Journalism after I was in the Army, and the photography course was what interested me the most.

I became an editor at *Parade* magazine, your favorite Sunday supplement. It was a wonderful three years to be in New York and to be young and male and have a job that didn't involve much heavy-lifting; I recommend it to anybody. At the end of that time, I got married and decided to have a real career, so I came back to Harvard to architecture school and graduated three-and-a-half years later. I worked first for a prominent architect, Earl Flansburgh, and then became an associate in Sert's office [Sert, Jackson and Associates].

And then I started writing again. The itch just hit me. I met someone from the *Globe* at a party, and it was one of those lucky things. I wrote on my lunch hours for a while. Then the horrible recession of 1975–76 hit, and the firm went from 68 people to 20. Although I was not going to be laid off, I decided it was time to leave. I bailed out with a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship and haven't had a job since. That was 1975. I've always freelanced for the *Globe*. I'm not an employee.

Christopher Lydon I'd be fascinated to hear how the *Globe* handles you. I'm thinking of my own time at the *Globe* in the





'60s when Tom Winship put the paper in the thick of the battles around Ed Logue and redevelopment, "renewal," and design questions. Who assigns you, and who edits you?

Robert Campbell Tom cared passionately about those issues. People tend to assume that the *Globe* assigns what to write, and it's not true. Ninety percent of the time, I'm the one who decides what I'm going to write about, and the *Globe* doesn't know until the article comes in. The *Globe* is one of the few papers left in the country that's independent enough to maintain the approach of letting their critics say what they're going to say. People sometimes assume that I don't have that kind of independence, but being a freelancer and not an employee gives me that much more freedom.

Christopher Lydon And what about your architecture practice?

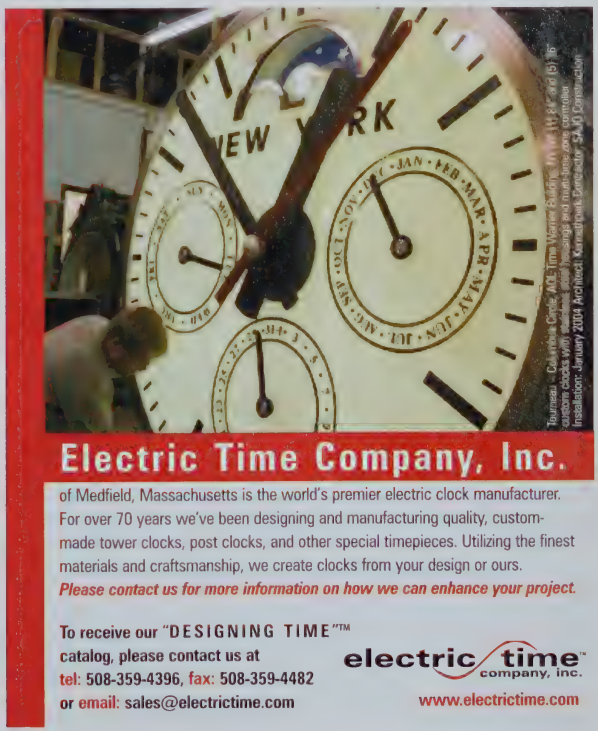
Robert Campbell When I left Sert, Jackson — I haven't worked on a major project since then — I went through a few little projects. I was writing a lot. One day it occurred to me that I was reaching an age where my peers were going to be doing work that I would want to write about. And I would be in the position of trashing people in the newspaper on Tuesday and competing with them for a commission on Wednesday, and this wasn't going to work out. I was going to have to choose. And again, a stroke of great luck — my life has been a series of strokes of luck — the American Academy of Arts and Sciences came along. Lawrence Anderson [former dean of the MIT school of architecture] asked me to help him build their new building; he didn't have any idea how to be a client. I signed on as an adviser, and we built the headquarters in Cambridge, a very successful building. And that's the kind of client I've had ever since then. I have been an adviser to nonprofit clients, usually cultural institutions and especially the Boston Symphony Orchestra, for 21 years.

Christopher Lydon What does a great symphony — with its own treasured hall — want to know about architecture?

Robert Campbell The best project for the Symphony was Ozawa Hall at Tanglewood. My role was to help them choose six architects to interview, one of whom turned out to be Bill Rawn. I advise clients that there has to be one "kid" on the interview list who, of course, isn't going to get the job, but will at least have a chance to present credentials to decision makers. Architects have so much trouble getting from designing mom's house and kitchen up to bigger jobs. Bill was the kid who was not going to get the job, who blew everybody away and did get the job.

Christopher Lydon You have serious training in both literature and design, and they both play a role in your work. Is there any sorting them out?





Robert Campbell No, I don't think so. Brendan Gill said to me once that he was principally a writer, but he'd always used architecture as a source of analogies in his mind. He was fascinated by architecture. And I feel exactly that way, except I use both equally, literature on the one hand and architecture on the other. I'm constantly seeing one in terms of the other. I think it's very important to have something besides the work that you do to shed light on your work, to be a source of comparisons and analogies.

Christopher Lydon Do you want to unveil the pantheon of the writers and the architects who feed you?

Robert Campbell There's a certain kind of writing that I like, a kind of loose, relaxed, comfortable epistolary style that reads a lot like a letter to a friend. The voice of the person writing comes through, with no pretense that this is coming down from on high. I would say Edmund Wilson is a very good example. Randall Jarrell, the poetry critic, is another great model for me. He gets so excited about what he's reading: "The greatest poem" And at the end of every review of a new book of poems, he lists the best poems in the book. He goes out on a limb. He takes his chances.

As far as architecture goes, I try to learn to appreciate everything, but of course I have my biases. I'm a huge Frank Lloyd Wright fan, for example.

Christopher Lydon Who else? Of all time. Including Michelangelo.

Robert Campbell Palladio's country houses are utterly fantastic. I could make a list of 50 right away. Sir John Soane. Thomas Jefferson — the University of Virginia is very possibly the greatest American building. Louis Kahn — the Kimbell would be its rival, if you wanted to pick the greatest American building. There's general agreement on those people, I think. Not everybody likes Frank Lloyd Wright. When I was at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, you couldn't mention Wright. The place was run by Europeans, and Wright was this theatrical American who did these self-involved buildings. There was one guy in my class who loved Wright and kept designing buildings like his, and he virtually flunked out.

Christopher Lydon Do you want to nominate some purely idiosyncratic, only-Bob-Campbell-loves-them, architects?

Robert Campbell Bernard Maybeck. His Christian Science Church in Berkeley is on my list of the 10 greatest American buildings. His houses are wonderful.

Christopher Lydon Name another who's not a household word — maybe one of your contemporaries.





Robert Campbell It's hard to judge your contemporaries. Some French or Spanish writer said of Robert Frost, "A very creative person is always very uneven." God knows Robert Frost was uneven, but he was also very great. I think you have to bear that in mind. A very creative person like Frank Lloyd Wright, and Frank Gehry today, is always reaching a little bit beyond the doable, and that means falling on your face at regular intervals.

I'm a great admirer of Frank Gehry. I think his new Disney concert hall is a great building and the best thing he's ever done. But then you say to yourself, when does a personal matter become a shtick? I think he's now definitely into his shtick period; he's doing the same building over and over again, and we'll have to see what happens.

Christopher Lydon What direction is architectural writing going in?

Robert Campbell Léon Krier, who's an old friend and the most retro architect in the world, said, "It's very important that we divorce architecture from art history." That is true. Art history is all about innovation; it's all about avant-gardism. Architecture lasts a long time and is very difficult to build. The peak of the pseudo-intellectual attitude toward architecture was about 1990, when all the schools were filled with people teaching architecture students elaborate

Linda's Coat

You bought a coat at Saks, a coat for shooting
elegantly in L.A., black to the ankles,
a smoky swirl beneath your golden hair.

But you were distressed. So many coats, you said,
dark coats in long ranks in the silent aisles.
Would anyone claim them? What would become of them?

That night a private screening troubled your sleep:
the window of pet store puppies, eager to please,
and the tailored greyhounds in the passing van.

— Robert Campbell
(first published, *Harvard Review*, Fall 1998)

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philosophical theories that the teachers themselves didn't understand very well. You went to architecture school and you were taught philosophy. I'm very happy that's coming to an end, and that there's going to be a rapprochement between schools that teach architecture and the offices that practice architecture, and that architecture will once again be thought of more as place-making.

Christopher Lydon The biggest place-making story of our time comes with all the proposals to rebuild the World Trade Center in Lower Manhattan. What did you think of them?

Robert Campbell They all looked to me as if they'd been lifted directly from old Flash Gordon comic books — take a tower and lean it 30 degrees outside. What does that have to do with anything? Will people rent an office on the 100th floor of a building on the site of the World Trade Center? It's not going to be me. It's not going to be you, I bet. The practical issues of how you make a world are so much more important than issues of how you invent some new form in architecture. I thought most of the proposals were terrible and that the ones that Herb Muschamp, who at that time was the architecture critic at *The New York Times*, solicited from his friends were even sillier. I think we'll finally get past that and start asking ourselves the real question: What makes a good place? Memory is important. Nature is important. Practicality, the purpose for which it's going to be built, is important. Intelligibility is very important.

A lot of people look at avant-garde buildings and have no idea what they're looking at, because there's no common language to represent the building. For me, that's the big thing. My definition of architecture is the art of making places. It's not an artist's sculpture. It's not the art of painting. Places can be rooms or corridors. They can be porches or streets. They can be gardens, golf courses. Places are made by human beings for human habitation. And that's how you need to evaluate them. I've seen that on the rise, and I'm very happy about that.

Christopher Lydon What has Boston meant as an intellectual and artistic space for a writer like you?

Robert Campbell Robert Lowell gave a reading once, in which he said it had been a source of disappointment to him his whole life that Boston was so much less creative than Nashville, Tennessee. We are not cutting-edge in architecture or anything else at the moment. Maybe that's good; maybe it's bad. A lot of people would say it's good; there's too much cutting-edge stuff elsewhere. I like being in Boston. I like our relationship to New York. When you write architectural criticism, since you are not advising people if they should buy tickets, you're writing about more than just a building. You're trying to raise issues that have some more general importance. There's more than enough happening here to write about. Would I be equally happy somewhere else? Probably not. ■

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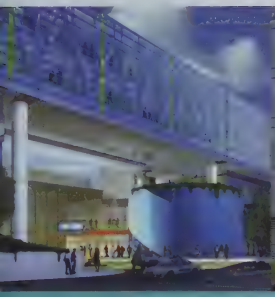
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BUT EVERYONE LOVES THE OUTSIDE!

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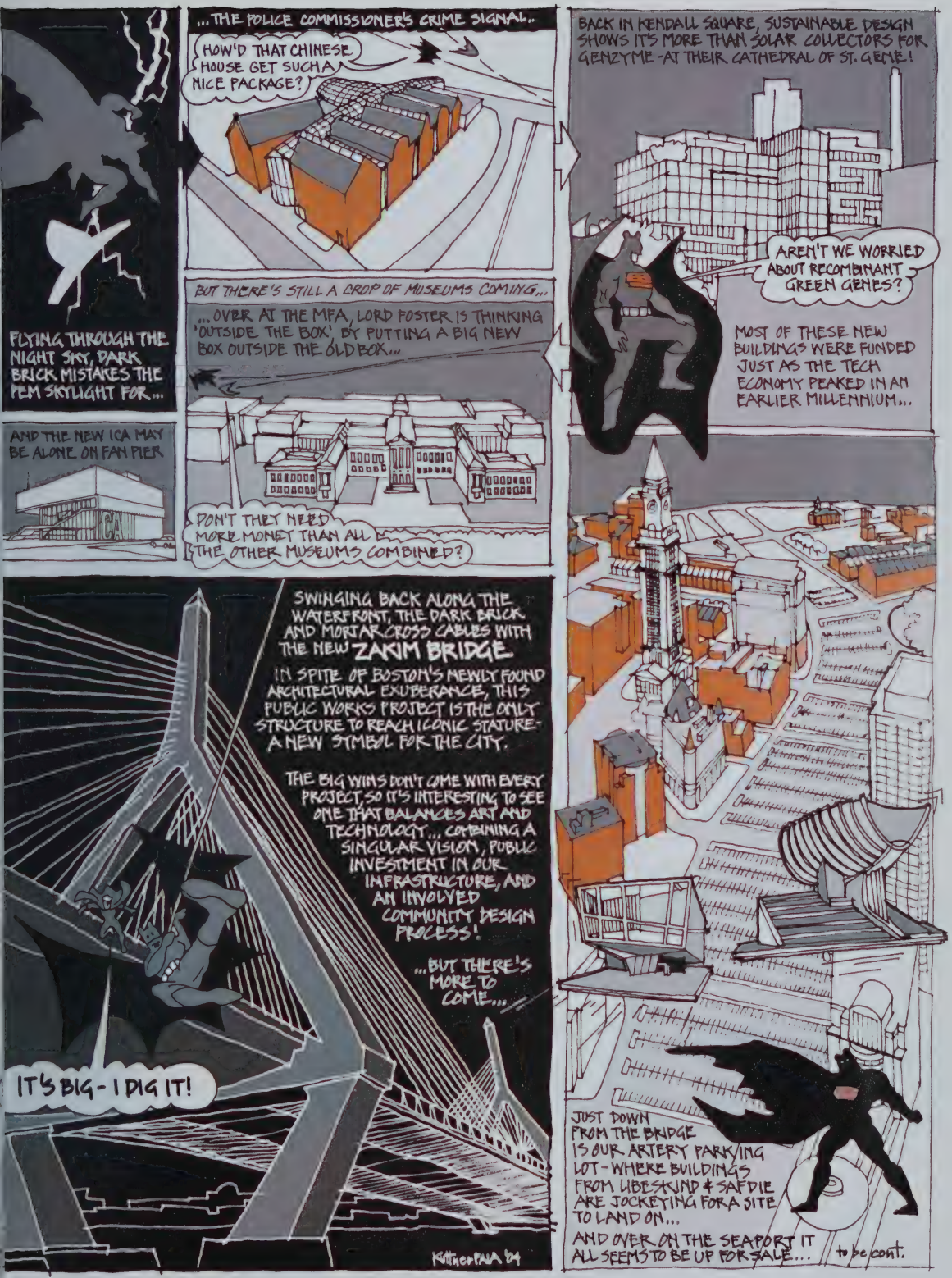
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HOW'D THAT CHINESE HOUSE GET SUCH A NICE PACKAGE?
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AND THE NEW ICA MAY BE ALONE ON FAN PIER
DON'T THEY NEED MORE MONET THAN ALL THE OTHER MUSEUMS COMBINED?
BACK IN KENDALL SQUARE, SUSTAINABLE DESIGN SHOWS IT'S MORE THAN SOLAR COLLECTORS FOR GENZYME - AT THEIR CATHEDRAL OF ST. GEME!
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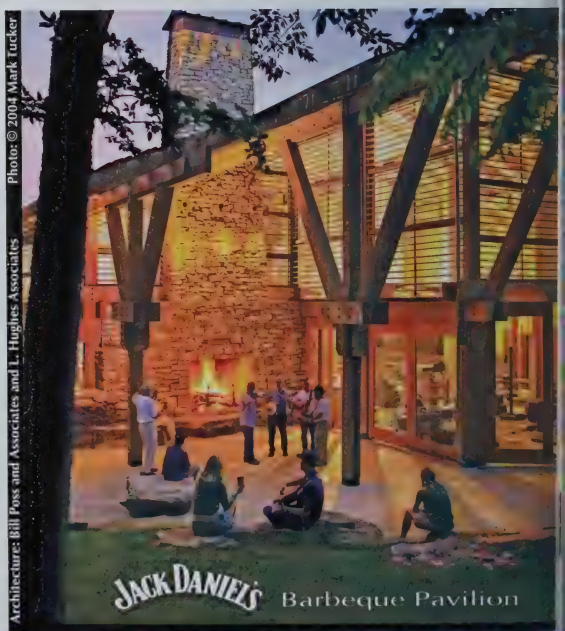
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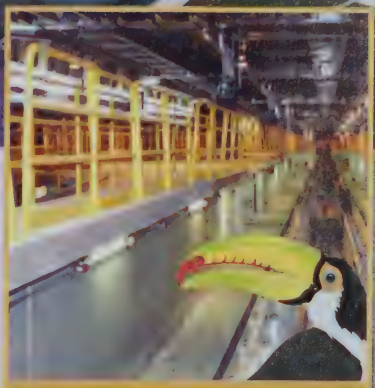
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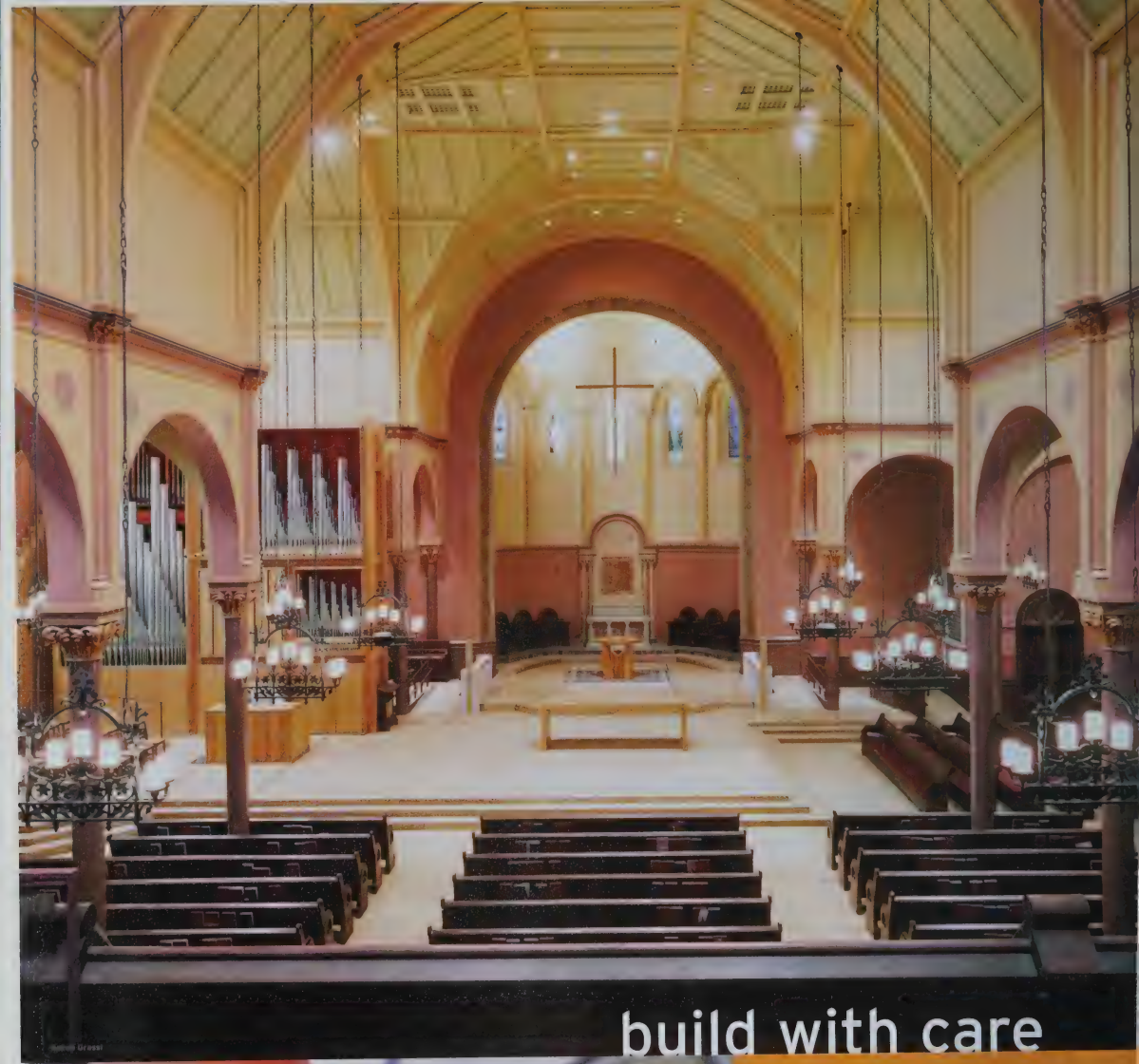
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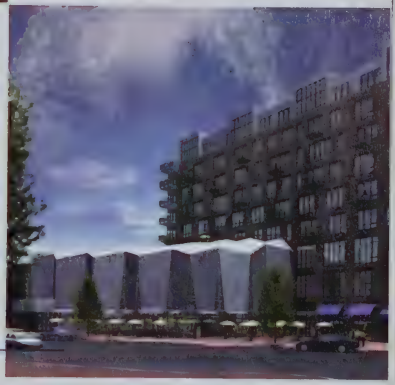




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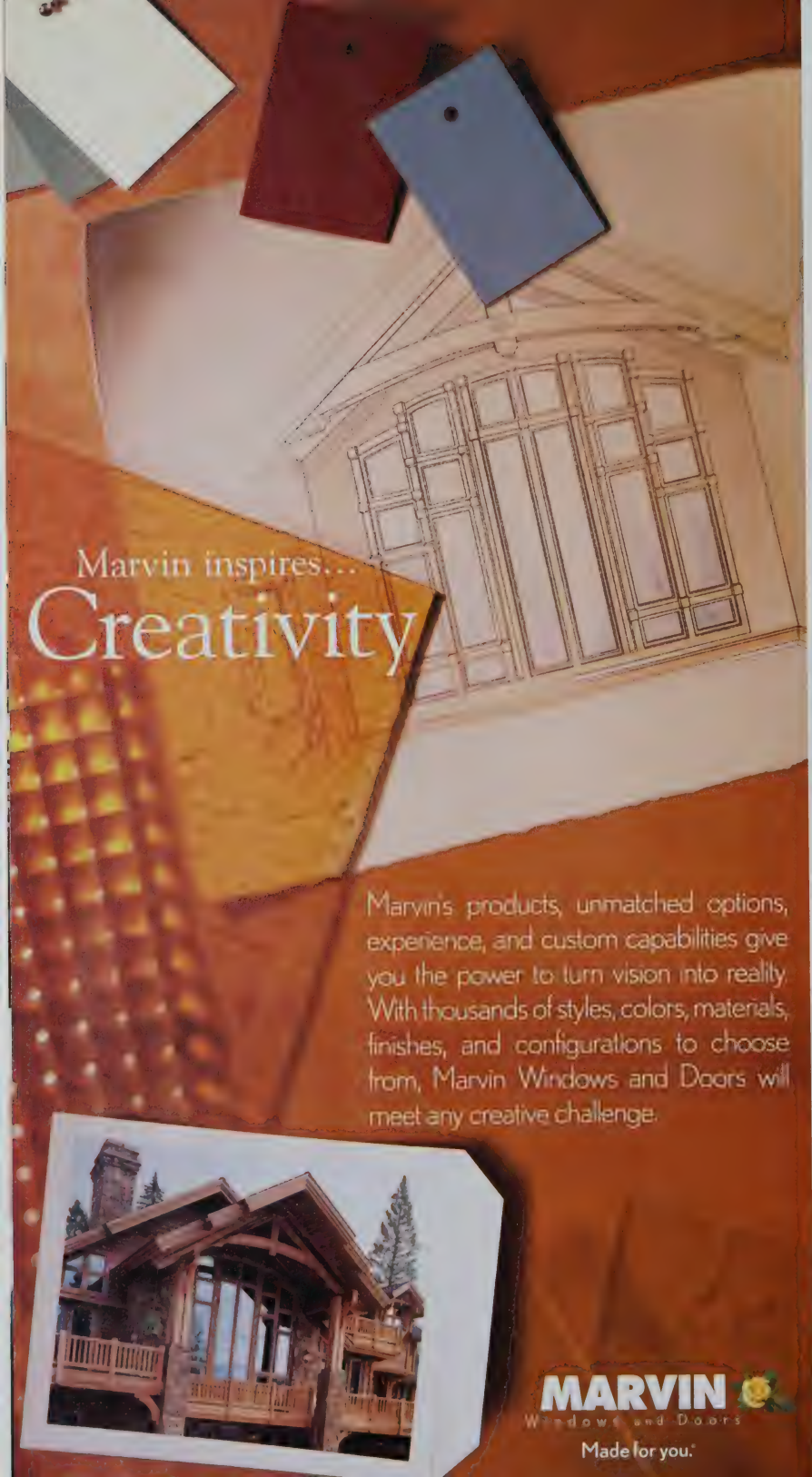
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Middletown, RI • 800.423.4235

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2004 Harleston Parker Medal

Simmons Hall Undergraduate Residence
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Steven Holl Architects with Perry Dean Rogers | Partners

JURY:

Lawrence Chan AIA
Chan Krieger & Associates
Cambridge, Massachusetts
(jury chair)

Alex Anmahian AIA
Anmahian Winton Architects
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Barbara Boylan AIA
Massachusetts Bay
Transportation Authority
Boston

David Eisen AIA
The Boston Herald
Abacus/Eisen Architects
Boston

Diane Georgopulos AIA
MassHousing
Boston

Daniel O'Connell
Spaulding & Slye Colliers
Boston

Deborah Poodry
Massachusetts Institute
of Technology
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Ronald Rich
A.J. Martini
Winchester, Massachusetts

Kairos Shen
Boston Redevelopment Authority
Boston

Nader Tehrani
Office dA
Boston

JURY COMMENTS:

More than any other candidate for this annual award, Simmons Hall has many, if not all, of the attributes sufficient to qualify the project for the 2004 Harleston Parker Medal. To be sure, the conclusion was not immediate or unanimous, and we did have some reservations that included: a questionable relationship to the street; hallways that appear too dark, too wide, and too low; the choice of material and finish for the interior organic spaces; the durability of the exterior skin over time; and an unfamiliar housing concept.

But we were not dissuaded by these apparent shortcomings; past winners have also had their share of flaws. We noted that MIT, the client, is an institution that supports innovation and change and that, regardless of how unusual the project may appear to the outside world, the project successfully fulfills its client's mission — physically, culturally, socially, and intellectually. We learned that the building is very popular with students, even though most of them come from conventional residential environments. We also recognized the innovative structural and mechanical systems that constitute some of the building's lesser known sustainable features, potentially qualifying the building for LEED Silver or Gold certification.

What truly elevates Simmons Hall is its daring, its freshness, and its high aspirations. There is a cerebral quality in the design that is still unfamiliar to our mental databanks, perhaps not unlike the occasions when Le Corbusier presented the Unité d'Habitation, or Carpenter Center, or when Pablo Picasso unveiled the painting of his first Cubist woman. We acknowledge the beauty and attributes of Simmons Hall and recognize that our appreciation will only grow and mature over time.

The Harleston Parker Medal was established in 1921 by J. Harleston Parker to recognize "the most beautiful piece of architecture, building, monument, or structure within the limits of the city of Boston or of the Metropolitan Parks District."

Editor's note:
The full text of jury comments may be found at www.architects.org/awards.



2004 Harleston Parker Medal
Simmons Hall Undergraduate Residence
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Client:
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Architect:
Steven Holl Architects
New York City
www.stevenholl.com

Associate architect:
Perry Dean Rogers | Partners

SHA project team:
Steven Holl AIA; Timothy Bade (project architect); Ziad Jameleddine; Anderson Lee; Peter Burns; Gabriela Barman-Kramer; Makram el Kadi; Annette Goderbauer; Mimi Hoang; Matt Johnson; Erik Langdalen; Ron-Hui Lin; Stephen O'Dell; Christian Wassmann

Contractor/construction manager:
Daniel O'Connell's Sons

Consultants:
Guy Nordenson and Associates (structural design engineer); Simpson Gumpertz & Heger (structural engineer of record); Arup (mechanical); Fisher Marantz Stone (lighting)

Photographers:
Andy Ryan (top and right) and Paul Warchol

Life at Simmons

What the architecture magazines don't tell you

BY ANNA BRUCHEZ (with JENNY HU)

The sounds within a building describe the nature of the habitat. Our home, renowned for its architecture, has sounds as unique as its character.

Rat-a-tat-tat! I awaken at 4 a.m. to the sound of machine guns. Are we under attack? No, it's just people watching the latest Bond flick in the lounge next door. I play the part of the grumpy neighbor as my sleep is once again disrupted by noise traveling through the multi-story lounges.

That's all right. Sleep has been fitful lately because it's so cool in this room. If only I didn't have nine windows, a concrete wall, and bare floors — all sucking warmth out of my room.

Ouch! I tripped over that useless cube on the way out the door. The cube is supposed to be used to open the upper windows, but it's so heavy, I can't move it around. Besides, nobody has time to open and close nine windows every day.

Buzz! At my early desk shift, I let in two very persistent architects. They don't seem to be intimidated by the Trogdor* threatening "burnination" at the front door. "I'm sorry, we can't let architects in. This is a residence," I tell them. In the blink of an eye, the architects have darted away and are now just a little speck at the end of the first-floor hallway. "Come back!" I yell, chasing after them. Shoot, foiled again. They've disappeared into the elevator. After my desk shift, I spend half an hour running around the building looking for them. When I find them, they have glazed-over looks in their eyes and are very confused. "We can't find the way out!" they plead. Nonetheless, they recover quickly enough to persuade me to show them my room.



Reluctantly, I take them in, waking up my still-slumbering roommate. My roommate and I feel like animals in a zoo, as the architects peruse our habitat at their leisure. They smell our holey trash can. They open our clear plastic drawers — Wait! No! Stop! That's my underwear drawer! The culprit turns to me with guilty eyes. No big deal, we're used to having our privacy invaded like this.

Crash! Bang! Ouch! I'm in an ambulance on the way to the medical center after smashing my leg. A friend talked me into helping him "loft" his bed. The furniture in this dorm is supposed to be modular, which means that students can reconfigure their furniture to fit their needs. Of course, the irony of it is that the furniture is extremely heavy. While we were lofting the bed, my friend dropped his end of the bed, and all 300 pounds of it came crashing down on my leg.

Oooo! The building howls at night like a coyote during a full moon. Maybe it's the ghost of Simmons. Can a two-year-old building have ghosts? Or maybe it's just the second-floor glass walkway. Either way, it is too chilly and windy to go out tonight. Disco party in the Meditation Room! It's the only lounge where the lights actually dim. ■

Anna Bruchez is an MIT junior majoring in biology. Jenny Hu is an MIT junior majoring in aeronautical and astronautical engineering. They have lived in Simmons Hall since its opening in 2002, their freshmen year.

*Editor's definition: Trogdor is a mythical dragon who, well, see for yourself: www.homestarrunner.com/sbemail58.html.

2004 Rotch Travelling Scholarship

Our Complete Constructions

BY TAMARA ROY AIA

JURY:

Alex H. Anmahian AIA
Anmahian Winton Architects
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Rebecca Barnes FAIA
Boston Redevelopment Authority
Boston

Steven Foote FAIA
Perry Dean Rogers Partners
Boston

Brian Healy AIA
Brian Healy Architects
Boston

Ralph Lerner FAIA
Princeton University
Princeton, New Jersey

First Prize ($35,000)
Aaron Follett

Second Prize ($15,000)
Elizabeth Kostojohn AIA

Alternate
Jason E. Knutson AIA

This year's Rotch competitors faced challenges at every turn: a Korean religious center with a program that featured three assembly spaces, including a children's chapel; a tight, sloping site with an existing church; a total lack of information regarding another cultural tradition; and 10 days to design and present their projects. Most of us would have given up right there.

With $35,000 for a year of travel to gain, they persevered. Aaron Follett, the winner (thus earning the title "2004 Rotch Scholar"), condensed his building on the urban side of the site, stacking three compact stories behind a teak screen. Layering functional elements like a wedding cake, he organized the assembly spaces one per floor, moving up the building from secular to religious spaces, with community outreach activities on the ground, a classroom above, and a children's chapel on the top. He left the rest of the site untouched, and gained the jury's respect for the clearest of diagrams. His milky interior perspectives make one want to know how, with more time, he might materially create the feeling of being encased in translucent blue and peach jelly(!).

Elizabeth Kostojohn, the second-prize winner, and Jason Knutson, the alternate, also developed compelling projects, hers a dispersion of objects paying homage to the church and sheltering play areas and a garden, his a whirlwind of movement whose vortex was the children's chapel perched like a water tower over the church.

Yet, for all their skillful manipulation of space, form, and structure, the projects seemed to avoid the real questions that this project poses. What is spirituality to the Korean church-goers? How do they feel about their existing church and its image in the neighborhood? In a Korean family structure, how would parents hope to communicate "God" to their children? How do architects make sacred space for young people? Although the competitors were each allowed 100 words to describe their project, the words "God," "spirit," "sacred," "religious," "Korean," and "family" were noticeably absent.

Have the bible-thumpers stolen our vocabulary for life's (or architecture's) big questions? Or do we now believe that architecture should remain detached, abstract, and nonspecific? Perhaps it is also the perceived rules of architectural competitions that make it unlikely the designers would address the problematic intersections between culture and building. We, as designers, are taught to show what we know, not to reveal where we have questions or, worse, that we might lack answers. Instead, we fill in the empty spaces with our own "stuff" before we notice that the blanks aren't ours to fill — we are the messengers, not the message.

Not surprisingly, those blanks become minimalistic visions, even in the face of mounting evidence that laypeople do not share the same love of empty space that we architects are taught to prize. The best spiritual buildings may be uncluttered, but they are anything but empty: think of Tadao Ando's Chapel on the Water, with its gritty concrete walls and huge pool of water reflecting a single cross, or Faye Jones' nearly breathing wood skeletal chapel in the forest. Nature is a vital element. Spiritual space is emotional space, and it is full.

Spiritual meaning, cultural identity, and humility are difficult topics in our profession, yet they are also some of the most important lessons these Rotch Scholars may learn from their travels. They are just at the beginning of their journeys to one of the greatest cultural and spiritual spaces there is — the world — and as they experience the diversity of other countries, belief systems, and buildings, they may get more comfortable with knowing less, asking questions, and realizing how incomplete our mental and physical constructions really are. ■

Tamara Roy AIA practices architecture and urban design at Von Grossmann & Company, teaches design at Northeastern University, and is a previous $15,000 second-prize winner of the Rotch Travelling Scholarship. This year's competition program was written by Brian Healy AIA.

The Rotch Travelling Scholarship was established in 1883 to advance architectural education through foreign study and travel. Rotch Scholars today are selected through an annual two-stage competition. For more information, go to www.rotchscholarship.org.






1. CULTURAL CENTER
2. CAFE
3. ARCADE
4. BATHROOMS
5. STORAGE
6. MECHANICAL ROOM
HARVARD STREET
PIERCE STREET

Honor Awards for Design Excellence

JURY:
James Childress FAIA
Centerbrook Architects
Centerbrook, Connecticut

George Miller FAIA
Pei Cobb Freed & Partners
New York City

Kate Schwennsen FAIA
Department of Architecture
Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa

JURY COMMENTS:

As we reviewed these projects, many questions came to mind about our profession and the current state of design. Why are there still so many poor examples of the ways in which buildings hit the ground — why don't all of us pay more attention to this critical design issue? Why does there seem to be so little innovation in the use of materials? Why is public school architecture seemingly so uninspired everywhere? Why do we as architects pay so little attention to the design of ceilings? Why as architects do we seem to find it so difficult to devote our design skills to the creation of interiors that are as well done as exteriors? Even with questions such as these in mind, we were struck this year by the extremely high level of competence of the work we had the pleasure to review. The traditional image of Boston and/or New England architecture as somehow "stodgy" or conservative was not borne out by the work we had the opportunity to examine this year. On the contrary, the work submitted not only confirmed the capacity of Boston-area architects to produce high-quality contemporary work, but also seemed to be a testimony to the thoughtfulness of the clients who commissioned the work.

Editor's note: The full text of jury comments, including responses to individual projects and advice on preparing submissions, may be found at www.architects.org/awards.

Honor Awards

39 Elkus/Manfredi Architects
Cutler Majestic Theatre
Emerson College
Boston

40 Elkus/Manfredi Architects
Tufte Performance and Production Center
Emerson College
Boston

41 Ellenzweig Associates
Traction Power Substation
Boston

42 Kallmann McKinnell & Wood Architects
World Trade Center West
Boston

43 Leers Weinzapfel Associates
Science Center Expansion
Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

44 Machado and Silvetti Associates
Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture
Tarrytown, New York

45 Charles Rose Architects
Carl and Ruth Shapiro Campus Center
Brandeis University
Waltham, Massachusetts

46 Kyu Sung Woo Architects
The Village Residence Halls
Brandeis University
Waltham, Massachusetts

Awards

47 Finegold Alexander + Associates
Dover Sherborn Regional Middle School
Dover, Massachusetts

47 Brian Healy Architects
Patrizio Residence
Gradyville, Pennsylvania

48 Machado and Silvetti Associates
South Boston Maritime Park
Boston

48 Payette Associates with Baldwin White Architects
Medical Education and Biomedical Research Facility
University of Iowa College of Medicine
Iowa City, Iowa





Honor Award
Cutler Majestic Theatre
Emerson College
Boston

Architect:
Elkus/Manfredi Architects
Boston
www.elkus-manfredi.com

Project team:
Howard F. Elkus FAIA, RIBA (principal-in-charge); Robert M. Koup AIA (project manager)

Contractor:
Lee Kennedy Company

Consultants:
Kirkegaard Associates (acoustical); Auerbach Pollock Friedlander (theater); Evergreene Painting Studios (interior restoration); LeMessurier Consultants (structural); Cosentini Associates (mechanical/electrical/plumbing)

This project restored Emerson College's Cutler Majestic Theatre to its original Beaux Arts grandeur. The project included the re-opening of the second balcony, expansion of seating capacity from 980 to 1,200 seats, enhancement of audience amenities, restoration of decorative finishes, and the addition of state-of-the-art theatrical systems.

Photographer:
Bruce T. Martin

Honor Award
Tufte Performance and Production Center
Emerson College
Boston

Architect:
Elkus/Manfredi Architects
Boston
www.elkus-manfredi.com

Project team:
Howard F. Elkus FAIA, RIBA (principal-in-charge); Robert M. Koup AIA (project manager)

Contractor:
Lee Kennedy Company

Consultants:
Kirkegaard Associates (acoustical); Auerbach Pollock Friedlander (theater); LeMessurier Consultants (structural); Cosentini Associates (mechanical/electrical/plumbing)

Photographers:
Peter Vanderwarker (bottom and right) and Benjamin Cheung

The Tufte Performance and Production Center houses the core of Emerson College's live performance, broadcast, and video production facilities. In completing the 11-story building on a tight, mid-block site, Elkus/Manfredi linked multiple campus buildings and created a new identity for the college in the Theater District.









Honor Award
Traction Power Substation
Boston

Client:
Massachusetts Bay
Transportation Authority

Architect:
Ellenzweig Associates
Cambridge, Massachusetts
www.ellenzweig.com

Project team:
Harry Ellenzweig FAIA; Michael Lauber AIA; Miltos Catomeris AIA; Gabriel Yaari; Patrick McDonough; Howard Magier; Michael Nipoti; Christina Contis; Imran Khan; Ed Koehler; James Suh

Contractor:
Walsh Construction Company of Illinois

Consultants:
Weidlinger Associates (structural); SAR Engineering (mechanical/electrical/plumbing/fire protection); Bryant Associates (civil); R.W. Beck/HNTB (traction power electrical engineers); Parsons Brinckerhoff Quade & Douglas (geotechnical/vent shaft); Timothy Johnson (rendering)

Photographer:
Peter Vanderwarker

This power plant for the MBTA honors its location in Boston's historic Quincy Market area. Recasting the predominant features of neighboring buildings in limestone walls with superimposed aluminum grids, the architects harmoniously housed a completely utilitarian, heavy-machinery function while avoiding imitative historical motifs.

Honor Award
World Trade Center West
Boston

Client:
Pembroke Real Estate
and The Drew Company

Architect:
Kallmann McKinnell & Wood Architects
Boston
www.kmwarch.com

Contractor/construction manager:
Turner Construction Company

Consultants:
Shooshanian Engineering Associates (mechanical/electrical/plumbing); Weidlinger Associates (structural); Parsons Brinckerhoff Quade & Douglas (civil); Elizabeth Banks Associates (landscape architect); Pressley Associates (landscape architect of record); Halvorson Design Partnership (streetscape landscape architect); Ripman Lighting Consultants (lighting)

Photographers:
Robert Benson (right and bottom) and Andrew DeLory

This office tower and two-story retail structure join the World Trade Center in Boston's Seaport District. The low-rise building features a steel trellis cornice and stainless steel mesh "sails" that provide wind mitigation and illumination for the pedestrian passage and roof-top garden.







Honor Award
Science Center Expansion
Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Architect:
Leers Weinzapfel Associates
Boston
www.lwa-architects.com

Project team:
Andrea P. Leers FAIA (principal-in-charge); Winnie Stopps AIA (design project manager); Alexander Carroll AIA (construction project manager/project architect); Nicolas D'Angelo; Rachel Levitt

Contractor:
Linbeck

Consultants:
Arup (mechanical/electrical/plumbing/structural); Stephen Stimson Associates (landscape); Cavanagh Tocci Associates (acoustical); Berg/Howland Associates (lighting); Kessler McGuinness & Associates (accessibility); Hanscomb Faithful & Gould (cost estimating)

Photographers:
Peter Aaron/Esto Photographics (top) and Alan Karchmer (bottom)

The project included the design of three rooftop additions and renovation of Josep Lluis Sert's landmark Harvard University Science Center (1970). All three additions are crystalline volumes made of cast glass channels, which are simple and austere in form, in contrast to the sculptural complexity of the original building.





Honor Award
Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture
Tarrytown, New York

Client:
Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture Management; Horne Rose, LLC

Architect:
Machado and Silvetti Associates
Boston
www.machado-silvetti.com

Project team:
Jorge Silvetti, Assoc. AIA (principal-in-charge); Michael LeBlanc; Markus Elkatsha; Andrew Cruse AIA; James Gresalfi; Seth Clark

Construction manager:
Turner Construction Company

Consultants:
Richard Burck Associates (landscape); Asfour Guzy Architects (restaurant interiors); Arup (mechanical/electrical/plumbing/acoustical/audio-visual/structural); Divney, Tung, Schwalbe (civil)

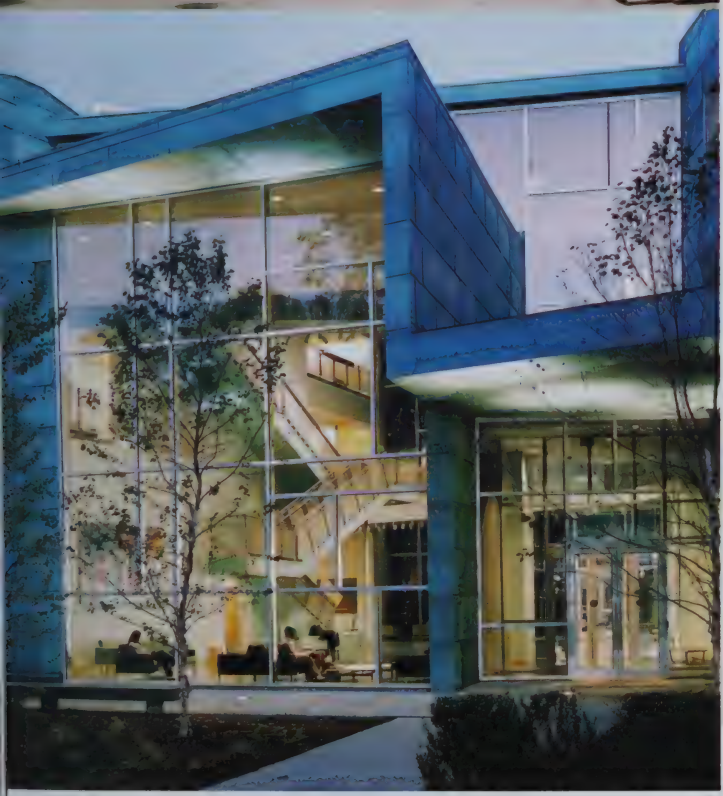
Photographer:
Michael Moran

The renovation and adaptive reuse of this collection of farm buildings is part of the creation of an 80-acre farmland preserve on the Rockefeller estate in upstate New York. Because of the picturesque environs, great significance was placed on the procession through the site, thereby maximizing views of the setting.









Honor Award
Carl and Ruth Shapiro Campus Center
Brandeis University
Waltham, Massachusetts

Architect:
Charles Rose Architects
Somerville, Massachusetts
www.charlesrosearchitects.com

Contractor:
William A. Berry & Son

Consultants:
Arup (structural/mechanical/electrical/plumbing); Stephen Stimson Associates (landscape); Judith Nitsch Engineering (civil); Acentech (acoustical/audio-visual); Light This (lighting); Alan P. Symonds (theater); Haynes-Roberts (interior design)

Photographers:
Chuck Choi (top and bottom) and John Edward Linden

The 65,000-square-foot limestone-and-copper campus center is centrally located on the Brandeis University campus and houses a 350-seat theater, computer library, recital hall, student clubs, bookstore, café, and a variety of meeting rooms. Pre-patinated copper panels clad the exterior north side, enhancing the building's sculptural volume.

Honor Award
The Village Residence Halls
Brandeis University
Waltham, Massachusetts

Architect:
Kyu Sung Woo Architects
Cambridge, Massachusetts
www.kswa.com

Construction manager:
William A. Berry & Son

Consultants:
Lim Consultants (structural); Vanderweil Engineers (mechanical/electrical/plumbing); Reed/Hilderbrand (landscape); McPhail Associates (geotechnical); Vanasse Hangen Brustlin (civil); Daedalus Projects (cost); Steven R. McHugh, Architect (construction specifications)

Photographer:
Roland Halbe

The design for this 220-bed project is based upon three courtyards, each with its own character and unique relationship to the campus. Adjacent common rooms provide the social and spatial organization. Lounge and study spaces distributed throughout create a "modified suite" configuration, based on the desire for small, flexible student communities.







Award
Dover Sherborn Regional Middle School
Dover, Massachusetts

Client:
Dover Sherborn Regional School District

Architect:
Finegold Alexander + Associates
Boston
www.faainc.com

Contractor:
Peabody Construction

Construction manager:
Tishman Construction Company

Consultants:
Boston Building Consultants (structural); Marc Mazzarelli Associates (landscape); Hanscomb Faithful & Gould (cost); Judith Nitsch Engineering (civil); Shooshanian Engineering (mechanical/electrical/plumbing); Mark T. Wilhelm AIA, Architect (specifications); Lucas Stefura Interiors (interiors); Merrimack Education Center (education planner); EdVance Technology Design (technology)

Photographer:
Chris Johnson

This new 93,000-square-foot middle school is part of a three-building complex. The design completes the campus with a new structure for the middle school while providing science programs for the high school. Circulation patterns are defined through expanded scale, lighting, and landscape views from the atrium.



Award
Patrizio Residence
Gradyville, Pennsylvania

Client:
Stephen and Judy Patrizio

Architect:
Brian Healy Architects
Boston
www.brianhealyarchitects.com

Contractor:
L.J. Paolella Construction

Consultants:
Derek Zoog (mechanical);
Chaloff Consulting (structural)

Photographer:
Paul Warchol

This is the primary residence for a couple with grown children. Accordingly, the clients requested two distinct living spaces — a master suite and guest area for their family, separated by a double-height living room with an open kitchen. This shared living area allows generous views of the surrounding landscape.



Award
South Boston Maritime Park
Boston

Client:
Massachusetts Port Authority

Architect:
Machado and Silvetti Associates
Boston
www.machado-silvetti.com

Consultants:
Halvorson Design Partnership (park design); Flanders + Associates (interpretive graphics); Earth Tech (civil/structural); Ellen Driscoll in collaboration with Make Architectural Metalworking (artist: "Aqueous Humor"); Carlos Dorrien (artist: "The Waves" and "Passage from the Sea"); Architectural Engineers (mechanical/electrical/plumbing/fire protection); GEI Consultants (geotechnical/environmental); Ripman Lighting Consultants (lighting); Irrigation Consulting (irrigation); Keville Enterprises (resident engineer)

Photographer:
Stephen Lee

Part of the initiative to redevelop the district by connecting the South Boston community to the waterfront, the design resulted from the collaboration of landscape and urban/architectural firms, where all elements work to create an integrated design. The site's configuration encourages a variety of uses, arranged around several distinct zones.

Award
Medical Education and Biomedical Research Facility
University of Iowa College of Medicine
Iowa City, Iowa

Architect:
Payette Associates
Boston
www.payette.com

Associate architect:
Baldwin White Architects

Contractor:
Knutson Construction Services

Consultants:
Alvine & Associates (mechanical/electrical); Charles Saul Engineering (structural); Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates (landscape)

Photographer:
Jeff Goldberg/Esto Photographics

As the initial academic building of a three-phase complex, the MEBRF is home to medical students and accommodates most of the educational, clinical, and administrative programs while providing state-of-the-art laboratories for biomedical research. All the building's users come together in a communal four-story atrium.



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Interior Architecture/Interior Design Awards

Honor Awards

51 Steven Ehrlich Architects with Symmes Maini & McKee Associates
675 West Kendall Street
in Kendall Square
Cambridge, Massachusetts

52 Hacin + Associates
Beacon Street Condominium
Brookline, Massachusetts

53 Hacin + Associates with Randall Baylon Architects
Fresh Retail Boutique
West Hollywood, California

Awards

54 Grant Studio
Photographer's Residence
and Studio
Boston

54 Hacin + Associates
Grafft-Hacin Loft
Boston

55 Paul Lukez Architecture
Indigo Restaurant
Needham, Massachusetts

55 Herbert S. Newman and Partners
Nathan Hale School
New Haven, Connecticut

56 Stern/McCafferty
Jilani Loft
Boston

56 Winter Street Architects
Simpson Gumpertz & Heger
Waltham, Massachusetts

JURY:

Ron Margolis AIA
Margolis + Fishman
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Lisa Whited IIDA, ASID, IDEC
Boston Architectural Center
Boston

Nick Winton AIA
Anmahian Winton Architects
Cambridge, Massachusetts

JURY COMMENTS:

Of the design work we examined this year, we were struck by how often the ceiling plane was ignored by designers, by how much reliance was placed on conventions, and by the general lack of art work (paintings, prints, photographs, other wallhangings, sculpture, and other art work) evident in the projects we examined.

But we were heartened to note that almost all the work submitted this year reflected a fairly sophisticated level of design competence, and we were thrilled by many exciting design moments we found in many of the portfolios.

In the end, we chose to honor nine projects that, to varying degrees, exemplify what we came to define as design excellence: that is, a project in which the attention to lighting, colors, furniture, signage, sounds, smells, and other substantive and sensory issues are thoughtfully addressed and successfully integrated into a strong design in which there is a seamless transition from exterior architecture to interior design. These attributes are evidence either of a design professional who has attended fully to the exterior as well as the interior or of a genuine and deeply felt collaboration between the professional who designed the exterior and the professional who designed the interior.

Editor's note: The full text of the jury's comments, including responses to individual projects and advice on preparing submissions, may be found at





Honor Award
675 West Kendall Street
in Kendall Square
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Client:
Lyme Properties

Architect:
Steven Ehrlich Architects
Culver City, California
www.s-ehrlich.com

Architect of record:
Symmes Maini & McKee Associates

Project team:
SEA: Steven Ehrlich FAIA (design principal); Thomas Zahlten AIA (principal-in-charge); Patricia Rhee AIA; George Elian; Aaron Torrence AIA; Carine Jaussaurd; Cedric Lombardo; Gregor Seeweg; Monika Russig
SMMA: Thomas A. Coffman AIA (principal-in-charge); Gordon Brewster PE (project manager); Henry S. Ricciuti AIA (construction administrator); Eric A. Peterson AIA; James E. Deitzer AIA; Roger H. Comee

Contractor:
Siena Construction

Consultants:
Arup (structural/mechanical/electrical/plumbing); Daylor Consulting Group (civil); Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates (landscape); Horton Lees Brogden Lighting Design (lighting); Heitman & Associates (curtain wall)

Photographers:
Paul Warchol (top), Peter Vanderwarker (bottom), and Chuck Choi

Located in the heart of a burgeoning biomedical research community, the project includes medical research laboratories, offices, support spaces, and ground-level retail. A design paradigm for the 300,000-square-foot structure was developed to reflect technologies emblematic of the biotech industry and also to relate to the existing architectural fabric of Cambridge.





Honor Award
Beacon Street Condominium
Brookline, Massachusetts

Client:
Lev Glazman + Alina Roytberg

Architect:
Hacin + Associates
Boston
www.hacin.com

Contractor:
Monaco Johnson Group

Consultants:
ANAP, Inc. (millwork)

Photographer:
Francine Zaslow

A large, traditional floor plan was reconfigured for a stylish young family into a modern, open plan defined by walls of cabinetry, screens, and distinctive materials. The apartment is organized on a long axis running from the street-facing living room to the park-facing bedrooms in the rear.

Honor Award
Fresh Retail Boutique
West Hollywood, California

Client:
Fresh, Inc.

Architect:
Hacin + Associates
Boston
www.hacin.com

Associate architect:
Randall Baylon Architects

Contractor:
JASS Construction Services

Consultants:
ANAP, Inc. (millwork)

Photographer:
John Edward Linden

Located on Sunset Boulevard in West Hollywood, this two-story cosmetics boutique and treatment area was conceived as a modern-day apothecary, with all-encompassing floor-to-ceiling cabinetry and custom-designed furniture. The design reflects and showcases the contemporary spirit of the company's broad range of product lines.



Award
Photographer's Residence and Studio
Boston

Client:
Kent Dayton

Architect:
Grant Studio
Boston
www.grantstudio.com

Project team:
Michael Grant AIA (project architect); Mike Hsieh; Jason Hickey; Hamis Mhando

Contractor:
Brite Builders

Consultant:
Kevin Musumano (interior design)

Photographer:
Kent Dayton

This residence is conceptualized as an "urban Usonian," an homage to Wright's low-cost houses built for the common man. Two steel-framed rolling panels, sheathed in walnut-veneer, link the work and living spaces and allow the photography studio to function as a second bedroom.





Award
Grafft-Hacin Loft
Boston

Client:
Tim Grafft and David Hacin AIA

Architect:
Hacin + Associates
Boston
www.hacin.com

Contractor:
Paris Building Group

Photographer:
Rick Mandelkorn

The design of this loft locates private rooms and spaces in a distinctive "box" within a larger open loft with dramatic city views. Kitchen, living, and dining functions flow from one to another in a 20-foot-high space that opens out to a large, wrap-around terrace.



Award
Indigo Restaurant
Needham, Massachusetts

Client:
Timm, Todd, and Ed Ciampolillo

Architect:
Paul Lukez Architecture
Somerville, Massachusetts
www.lukez.com

Project team:
Paul Lukez AIA (principal); Jim Bruneau; Ben Gramann

Contractor:
Wess Company

Consultants:
Chimera Lighting Design (lighting); Roger Chudzik (metal work)

Photographer:
Greg Premru

Located in a strip mall, Indigo buffers visitors from the harshness of the exterior environment and seduces the visitor to engage in a culinary and visual spectacle by using a rich array of materials. The visitor is immersed in a comfortable environment centered on food, its preparation, and celebration.



Award
Nathan Hale School
New Haven, Connecticut

Client:
School Construction Program
City of New Haven

Architect:
Herbert S. Newman and Partners
New Haven, Connecticut
www.hsnparch.com

Project team:
Herbert S. Newman FAIA; Richard Munday AIA (project manager); Michelle Ariola (interior designer)

Program manager:
Gilbane Building Company

Construction manager:
Giordano Construction Company

Consultants:
Goodkind & O'Dea (civil/landscape/mechanical/electrical/plumbing); Thomas Torrenti PE (structural)

Photographer:
Woodruff/Brown



The architect believed that a renewed school, with an addition that would be much larger than the original, could honor the educational aspirations of an earlier New Haven, while also reflecting contemporary ideas about education and architecture.

Award
Jilani Loft
Boston

Architect:
Stern/McCafferty
Boston
www.sternmccafferty.com

Photographer:
Anton Grassl

In this downtown loft, living areas are defined through the interplay of volumes and planes, thus preserving the openness of the space. Walnut-paneled boxes of various proportions function both as containers (housing closets and bathrooms) and as objects (demarcating kitchen, living room, bedroom, and guest room/office), while elevated floor planes subtly define private areas.





Award
Simpson Gumpertz & Heger
Waltham, Massachusetts

Client:
Simpson Gumpertz & Heger

Architect:
Winter Street Architects
Salem, Massachusetts
www.wsarchitects.com

Contractor:
Spaulding & Slye Colliers

Consultants:
Simpson Gumpertz & Heger (structural); Building Engineers Resources (mechanical/electrical/plumbing)

Photographer:
Albert Vecerka/Esto Photographics

This design takes advantage of the building's bones to establish the basic rhythm of the space. The design, which revealed the exposed structure of the building, includes a combination of closed and open offices, laboratories for destructive testing, a large resource library, and a training room.

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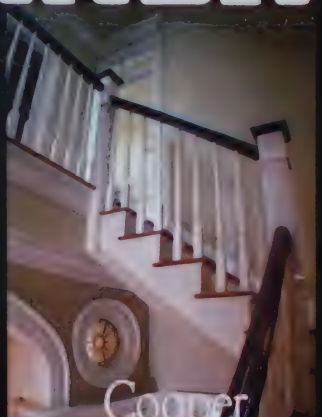
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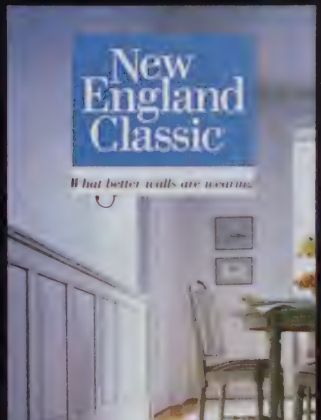
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Housing Design Awards

Honor Awards

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Minneapolis Loft
Minneapolis

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Wiess College, Rice University
Houston

61 Stelle Architects
Beach House
Seaview, Fire Island, New York

62 Taller de Enrique Norten Arquitectos
Parque España Residential Building
Mexico City

Awards

63 Louise Braverman, Architect
Chelsea Court
New York City

63 Hacin + Associates
The Lofts at East Berkeley
Boston

64 Brian Healy Architects
Patrizio Residence
Gradyville, Pennsylvania

64 Scarano & Associates Architects
The 234 West 20th Street Condomini
New York City

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Valentine Houses
Cambridge, Massachusetts

65 Taller de Enrique Norten Arquitectos
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Mexico City

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Arverne-by-the-Sea, Phase 1A
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The Ritz-Carlton Hotel and Residence
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Jamestown, Rhode Island

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The Homes at Carneros Inn
Napa, California

JURY:

Scott Keller AIA
Gruzen Samton Architects
New York City

Barbara Skarbinski AIA
ABS Architect
New York City

Ilkka Suvanto AIA
Bergmeyer Associates
Boston
Co-Chair, BSA Housing Committee

Martha Werenfels AIA
Durkee Brown Viveiros & Werenfels
Providence, Rhode Island

Peter Wiederspahn AIA
Northeastern University
Wiederspahn Architecture
Somerville, Massachusetts

JURY COMMENTS:

Among the submissions were many multi-family projects (including market-rate and affordable developments) and single-family residences. We also reviewed loft conversions, HOPE VI projects, dormitories, senior living facilities, and high-end summer homes. Regrettably, there were no simple, small houses included in the body of work we saw this year.

With the exception of a few loft renovations, we saw little innovation in this body of work; however, much of the work manifested a high level of design competence. As always, unfortunately, the interior design of many multi-family projects we reviewed did not receive the same attention that the designers brought to bear on the exterior design. We were also quite surprised to find almost no attention given to sustainable-design issues.

As we examined a broad range of high-budget and low-budget projects, we were reminded once again that successful small-budget projects — like high-budget projects — are those that effectively integrate all the design elements thoughtfully, reflect superior craftsmanship and efficiency in design, pay serious attention to detail, and devote care to the planning of the project.

Editor's note: [illegible] text of jury comments, including responses to individual projects and advice on preparing submissions, may be found at [illegible]

Honor Award
Minneapolis Loft
Minneapolis

Architect:
Anmahian Winton Architects
Cambridge, Massachusetts
www.anmahian-winton.com

Associate architect:
James Dayton Design

Contractor:
Kraus-Anderson

Consultants:
Oslund & Associates (landscape);
Gregorian Engineers (structural)

Photographer:
George Heinrich

This 4,000-square-foot penthouse loft and 3,000-square-foot roof garden occupy a converted mill building on the Mississippi River. Both the loft and garden embrace a minimalist design vocabulary. The loft material is predominantly Douglas fir, and the garden landscape is defined by planes and volumes of COR-TEN steel.





Honor Award
Wiess College
Rice University
Houston

Client:
Rice University

Architect:
Machado and Silvetti Associates
Boston
www.machado-silvetti.com

Architect of record:
Kirksey

Project team:
Rodolfo Machado, Assoc. AIA (principal-in-charge); Jorge Silvetti, Assoc. AIA (consulting principal); Gretchen Neeley (project manager); Robert Trumbour, Stephen Atkinson (project coordinators); Jonathan Cherry; Mario D'Artista; Christine Everett; David Freed AIA; Jonathan Hoover; Brian Huffines; Sebastian Martellotto; Gary Rohrbacher; Rodrigo Vidal; Michael Yusem

Construction manager:
Brown & Root

Consultants:
Haynes Whaley Associates (structural); CHP & Associates (mechanical); Walter P. Moore & Associates (civil); Kudela & Weinheimer (landscape); WJHW, Inc. (technology); Thomas Ricca Associates (kitchen)

Photographers:
Richard Payne (top) and Michael Moran (bottom)

The project includes two dining halls and a dormitory surrounding a central courtyard. The building takes the form of a single-loaded corridor, where the suites are located on the exterior, accessible via open-air corridors shaded by ivy-covered screens. The contemporary architectural language is developed from the historic character of the campus.









Honor Award
Beach House
Seaview, Fire Island, New York

Architect:
Stelle Architects
Bridgehampton, New York
www.stelleco.com

Project team:
Frederick Stelle; Walter Wilcoxen; Alexander Keller

Contractor:
William Svingos

Consultant:
Chris LaGuardia (landscape)

Photographer:
Jeff Heatley

The house is located on the south shore of a densely developed Atlantic beach community. Three interconnecting buildings, equal in plan size, discreetly accommodate owners, guests, and children in privacy. The simple uninsulated buildings use durable materials to withstand the harsh conditions with minimum maintenance.

Honor Award
Parque España Residential Building
Mexico City

Client:
Haydee Rovirosa

Architect:
Taller de Enrique Norten Arquitectos
New York City/Mexico City
www.ten-arquitectos.com

Project team:
Enrique Norten; Bernardo Gomez-Pimienta; Luis Enrique Mendoza; Elzbieta Szczepanska; Julio Amezcua; Miguel Ríos; Miguel Hsiung.

Contractor:
Grupo BAIA

Consultants:
Colinas de Buen (structural); Diseños Integrales de Ingeniería (mechanical/electrical/plumbing); Val y Val (glazing and window framing); Arq. Gustavo Aviles, Arquitectura Automatica (lighting); Miguel Ríos (model); Miguel Hsiung (computer model)

Photographer:
Jaime Navarro

Six single-family apartments were designed above a ground-floor art gallery and garage. Open plans allow residents to design the spaces as they desire. The street façade is sheltered by a slender balcony with an aluminum grid and sliding partitions with translucent fabric, which provide privacy, light diffusion, and sun protection.





Award
Chelsea Court
New York City

Client:
Palladia, Inc.

Architect:
Louise Braverman, Architect
New York City
www.newyork-architects.com/louise.braverman

Project team:
Louise Braverman (design principal); Gregory Ginter; Christopher Huffman; Charles Norman; Jason Roselar

Contractor:
P & P Contracting

Consultants:
Goldreich Engineering (structural); Kallen & Lemelson (mechanical)

Photographers:
Kristine Foley (left) and Scott Frances (right)

Chelsea Court, an affordable-housing project specifically designed for 18 previously homeless and low-income tenants, is a tribute to the belief that aesthetic environments enhance the lives of all people, rich or poor. Community facilities, including a lounge, conference room, roof deck, laundry, and offices, complement the apartments.







Award
The Lofts at East Berkeley
Boston

Client:
The Hamilton Company
Russell Development, Inc.

Architect:
Hacin + Associates
Boston
www.hacin.com

Contractor:
The Hamilton Company

Consultants:
Souza, True and Partners (structural); Zade Company (mechanical)

Photographer:
Rick Mandelkorn (left) and David Coe

Sited on an important "gateway" intersection in Boston's South End, this project incorporates a "skip-stop" corridor system to create split-level, loft-style apartments with through-ventilation and circulation in a highly efficient floorplate. The multiple floor levels are expressed at the corner, where a double-height lobby gallery is located.



Award
Patrizio Residence
Gradyville, Pennsylvania

Clients:
Stephen and Judy Patrizio

Architect:
Brian Healy Architects
Boston
www.brianhealyarchitects.com

Contractor:
L.J. Paolella Construction

Consultants:
Derek Zoog (mechanical); Charles Chaloff Consulting (structural)

Photographer:
Paul Warchol

This is the primary residence for a couple with grown children. Accordingly, the clients requested two distinct living spaces — a master suite and a guest area for their family, separated by a double-height living room with an open kitchen. This shared living area allows generous views of the surrounding landscape.

Award
The 234 West 20th Street Condominium
New York City

Client:
Matthew Blesso

Architect:
Scarano & Associates Architects
Brooklyn, New York
www.scaranoarchitects.com

Project team:
Eugene Drubetskoy;
Robert M. Scarano Jr.

Contractor:
Sukamo Construction

Consultant:
Anthony A. Gennaro (structural)

Photographer:
Eugene Drubetskoy

A gut renovation and addition that created two triplex apartments, the design is based on capturing views. The slanted window bows to the street, while people standing inside can look down into the neighborhood and onto the skyline through a single opening. Materials include stucco, aluminum, glass, and restored brick.



Award
Valentine Houses
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Client:
Azzam Development & Design

Architect:
SINGLE speed DESIGN
Cambridge, Massachusetts
www.singlespeeddesign.com

Contractor:
Azzam Development & Design

Consultants:
Sarkis Zerounian & Associates (structural);
Boston Landscape Company (landscape)

Photographer:
Erik Gould

These three new townhouses transform Cambridgeport's wood-frame housing, addressing boundaries between inside and outside, privacy and community. A critique of the inward-looking "winterized box," the project incorporates double height interior/exterior spaces, cantilevered balconies, and shared roof gardens — all of which become a language for further urban developments.



Award
House RR
Mexico City

Architect:
Taller de Enrique Norten Arquitectos
New York City/Mexico City
www.ten-arquitectos.com

Project team:
Enrique Norten; Bernardo Gómez-Pimienta; Francisco Pardo; Aarón Fernández; Julio Amezcua

Contractor:
Mardduh Construcciones

Consultants:
Procesamiento de Ingeniería Estructural (structural); Arq. Gustavo Aviles/Arquitectura Automática (lighting); Aluminio y Cristal Arquitectónico (glazing and window framing); Julio Amezcua (model)

Photographer:
Luis Gordoa

The house's primary entrance leads to a staircase encased in a glass paneled tower. On the middle level, a living room, dining area, and kitchen spill outward towards a hard landscaped courtyard. The top level has a family room, located at the top of the stair tower, which is linked to the bedrooms by a transparent bridge.





Citation
Arverne-by-the-Sea, Phase 1A
Arverne, New York

Client:
Benjamin-Beechwood

Architect:
Ehrenkrantz Eckstut & Kuhn Architects
New York City
www.eekarchitects.com

Contractor:
Benjamin-Beechwood

Consultants:
Vollmer Associates (civil); Quennell Rothschild & Partners (landscape); The Sam Schwartz Company (traffic); Barbara Morello (rendering)

Photographer:
Christian Tschoeke

Phase IA, developed as a model block for the larger 2,300-unit development, marks a new era of optimism for this area of New York's Rockaway Peninsula. EE&K developed four housing prototypes, including two- and three-story semi-attached two-family units. A series of landscaped open spaces, including a landscaped "mews," knit together the 64 new homes.



Citation
The Ritz-Carlton Hotel and Residences, Georgetown
Washington, DC

Client:
Millennium Partners and EastBanc

Architect:
Handel Architects
New York City
www.handelarchitects.com

Associate architect:
Shalom Baranes Associates

Project team:
Gary Handel AIA (principal); Carrie Alice Johnson (project designer); Fred Alvarez AIA (project manager); Debra King (lead interior designer); David Kilpatrick, Kevin Crosby, Ky Makagi, Bo Lee (interiors); Ryoko Oda; Sylvia Won; Adi Purnomo; Leslie Shih

Contractor:
Bovis Lend Lease

Consultants:
DeSimone Consulting Engineers (structural); Engineering Design Group (mechanical/electrical); Hargreaves Associates (landscape)

Photographer:
Maxwell MacKenzie

The adaptive re-use of an existing 1932 incinerator building was combined with new construction to create this six-building, mixed-use complex. The project includes a five-star hotel, luxury condominiums, cinema complex with 14 screens, fitness club, spa, retail space, and parking for 350 cars.



Citation
Jamestown Residence
Jamestown, Rhode Island

Architect:
Lerner | Ladds + Bartels
Providence, Rhode Island
www.llbarchitects.com

Contractor:
Ray Construction Company

Consultants:
Beckman Weremay (landscape); Odeh Engineers (structural); Markus Early Lighting Design (lighting); Glass Project, Paul Housberg (glass stair railing)

Photographer:
Warren Jagger

The requirement for an artist's studio and separate family residence suggested the form and arrangement of this Jamestown hybrid. Using traditional New England forms, the design creates a distinctly modern flow of spaces. The two major volumes frame an outdoor courtyard and are sited to capture the view toward water.



Citation
Glass-Walsh Residence
Lexington, Massachusetts

Client:
Frank Walsh and Amy Glass

Architect:
Paul Lukez Architecture
Somerville, Massachusetts
www.lukez.com

Project team:
Paul Lukez AIA (principal); Jim Bruneau; Mark Fuller

Contractor:
MBN Contractors

Consultants:
Gale A. Lindsay Interior Design (interior design); Steve Highfill (structural); CBA Landscape Architects (landscape); Chimera Lighting Design (lighting); Iron Bear Forge (metal work)

Photographers:
Greg Premru (above) and Grey Crawford

Located in a community beset by the "tear-down/mansionization" phenomenon, this house offers an alternative based on an easy-to-build, efficient, and compact plan. While sensitive to the scale of neighboring 1950s tract homes, this design generates dynamic interior spaces with a rich palette of materials and details.



Citation
173/176 Perry Street
New York City

Architect:
Richard Meier & Partners
New York City

Project team:
Richard Meier FAIA; Donald Cox; Carlos Tan

Consultants:
Robert Silman & Associates (structural); Ambrosino, DePinto & Schmieder (mechanical/electrical/plumbing); Zion Breen & Richardson Associates (landscape); Fisher Marantz Stone (lighting); Arup (energy); Arup Acoustics (acoustical); Gordon H. Smith Corporation (curtainwall consultant); Enclos Corporation (curtainwall engineer); Reginald D. Hough Architect (architectural concrete); Lerch Bates & Associates (elevator); Development Consulting Services (zoning); Metropolis Group (expeditor)

Photographer:
Richard Schulman

The 16-story transparent residential towers, standing at the north and south corners of Perry and West Street in the West Village overlooking the Hudson River, are a minimalist addition to the New York City skyline.

Citation
The Homes at Carneros Inn
Napa, California

Client:
Carneros Partners

Architect:
William Rawn Associates
Boston
www.rawnarch.com

Associate architect:
Persinger Hale Architects

Project team:
William Rawn III FAIA, Douglas Johnston AIA (principals); David Bagnoli AIA (associate)

Contractor:
Andrews & Thornley

Consultants:
Carlenzoli and Associates (civil); Olin Partnership (landscape); Shopworks (interior design)

Photographer:
Mark Hundley

The Carneros Inn celebrates the blend of sophistication and agricultural roots that defines Napa Valley today, featuring 86 individual guest cottages, 24 courtyard resort homes, meeting spaces, a full-service spa, and public restaurant. Phase II comprises a Carneros town square with a food and wine market and a post office.





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Campus Planning Design Awards

Awards

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Campus Master Plan
Texas A & M University
College Station, Texas

72 William Rawn Associates
Master Plan and
Residence Halls
Northeastern University
Boston

72 Sasaki Associates
Master Plan
University of Balamand
Tripoli, Lebanon

73 SEYAS/ZNA/UPU Consortium
New Campus Master Plan
University of Sarajevo
Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

JURY:

Geoffrey Freeman AIA
Shepley Bulfinch
Richardson and Abbott
Boston

John Furlong FASLA
The Landscape
Institute/Arnold Arboretum
of Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Carol R. Johnson FASLA
Carol R. Johnson
Associates
Boston

Robert Simha MCP
Author, former director
of planning at MIT
Cambridge, Massachusetts

JURY COMMENTS:

We defined campus planning as the articulation and documentation of a long-range view of a proposed arrangement of buildings, landscapes, and infrastructure in support of the institution's purpose, programs, priorities, and physical presence. We underscored the importance of considering such factors as site history and realities, town-and-gown interface, implementation strategies and phasing, and the opportunities to express campus heritage (the past) and vision (the future) through a creative blend of place-making and place-marking concepts. We were struck by the number of portfolios that included little or no information on context, a striking omission in a program focusing precisely on contextual issues informed by the understanding that campus planning is a community-building effort, not a building-design effort. We believe a campus plan should have its origins in the intellectual, physical, political, social, and other goals and objectives of an institution — that is, the context.

Editor's note: The full text of jury comments, including responses to individual projects and advice on preparing submissions, may be found at

Award
Campus Master Plan
Texas A & M University
College Station, Texas

Architects:
Michael Dennis & Associates
Boston
www.michaeldennis.com

Barnes, Gromatzky, Kosarek Architects
Austin, Texas
www.bgkarchitects.com

Project team:
MDA: Michael Dennis; Erik Thorkildsen; Christie Monroe
BGK: Carl Gromatzky AIA; Thomas Kosarek AIA; Jay Barnes III AIA; Anthony Marco

Consultants:
Sasaki Associates (landscape); Dr. Bryce Jordan (academics); Paulien and Associates (academic space planning)

Photographer:
Michael Dennis & Associates

This campus master plan provides a design, architectural guidelines, and a process for bringing the physical envir onment into complementary alignment with the academic and social missions of the university. It seeks to accomplish this through two primary means: growth management and improved quality of the physical environment.





Award
Master Plan and Residence Halls
Northeastern University
Boston

Architect:
William Rawn Associates
Boston
www.rawnarch.com

Contractor:
Turner Construction Company

Consultants:
LeMessurier Consultants (structural); Cosentini Associates, TMP Consulting Engineers (mechanical/electrical); Pressley Associates (landscape); Ripman Lighting Consultants (lighting); R.E. Cameron Associates (surveyor); Brassard Design & Engineering (civil); Daedalus Projects (cost estimator); Haley & Aldrich (geotechnical); Vanasse Hangen Brustlin (traffic); RWDI (wind)

Photographers:
Steve Rosenthal (bottom), Alan Karchmer, and Alex MacLean

The 10-year institutional master plan organizes a 10-acre mixed-use sector of campus with 1.2 million gross square feet of residential, academic, and retail facilities in eight buildings. Five of the buildings, designed by William Rawn Associates, have been built since 2000.





Award
Master Plan
University of Balamand
Tripoli, Lebanon

Architect:
Sasaki Associates
Watertown, Massachusetts
www.sasaki.com

Project team:
Anthony Mallows AIA (principal-in-charge); Dennis Pieprz, Assoc. AIA (design principal); Philip Parsons (education planner); Peter Hedlund (landscape architect); Pablo Savid (architect); Riki Nishimura, Assoc. AIA, Nayla Naufal (planners); Stephen Kun (CAD technician)

A dominant theme of the plan is a "path of learning" that winds through the landscape to a village-like concentration of academic buildings, clustered to encourage cross-disciplinary collaboration. The dense build-out of this section of the campus allows for an environmentally sensitive treatment of the university's land, while creating opportunities for the development of a close-knit academic community.

Award
New Campus Master Plan
University of Sarajevo
Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Architects:
SEYAS/ZNA/UPU Consortium

SEYAS International
Istanbul, Turkey

ZNA/Zeybekoglu Nayman Associates
Cambridge, Massachusetts

UPU/University Programming Unit
Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Project team:
SEYAS: Yalcin Tezcan (principal-in-charge of management); Ergin Tanberk (project coordinator)
ZNA: Ilhan Zeybekoglu AIA (principal-in-charge of design); Hubert Murray AIA, RIBA (senior campus planning consultant); Yunus Tasci, Felipe Eguia (senior designers)

The new campus will serve 12,000 students and 1,500 faculty members, accommodating 11 faculties, research institutes, and common facilities. Planned as a dense campus on a 22-hectare site at the edge of the old city, the buildings are designed around a public realm of walkways, plazas, and courtyards.





Healthcare Facilities Design Awards

Honor Award

75 TRO/The Ritchie Organization
Daniel and Grace Tully
and Family Health Center
Stamford, Connecticut

Award

76 Steffian Bradley Architects
D'Amour Center for Cancer Care
Springfield, Massachusetts

Citation

77 MDS/Miller Dyer Spears
Jimmy Fund Clinic
Boston

JURY:

John Messervy AIA
Partners HealthCare Systems
Boston

Kenneth Taylor AIA
Taylor & Partners
Boston

Rosalyn Cama FASID
Cama Inc.
New Haven, Connecticut

Jack Hobbs AIA
RF Walsh Company
Boston

JURY COMMENTS:

There is no doubt that creating soothing healthcare environments remains a challenging task for all of us. In occasional submissions this year, we found several excellent narrative descriptions of design intentions that, unfortunately, were not realized in the finished project. We were also struck by the presence in several projects of exceptionally extensive use of wood, which in many cases seems more appropriate to law offices than to healthcare facilities. Reminded by many of this year's submissions of the extraordinary degree to which medical equipment shapes design, we believe it may be useful for the design professions to encourage manufacturers of medical equipment to push the envelope of their own design in order to keep pace with the needs and sophistication of healthcare clients and of architects and interior designers as well.

Editor's note: The full text of jury comments, including responses to individual projects and advice on preparing submissions, may be found at www.architects.org/awards.

Honor Award
Daniel and Grace Tully and Family Health Center
Stamford, Connecticut

Client:
Stamford Health System

Architect:
TRO/The Ritchie Organization
Newton, Massachusetts
www.troarch.com

Project team:
Robert W. Hoye AIA (executive principal); David Deininger AIA (master planning principal); Joanne MacIsaac IFMA, IIDA (interior design principal); James F. Newton PE (mechanical/electrical/plumbing principal)

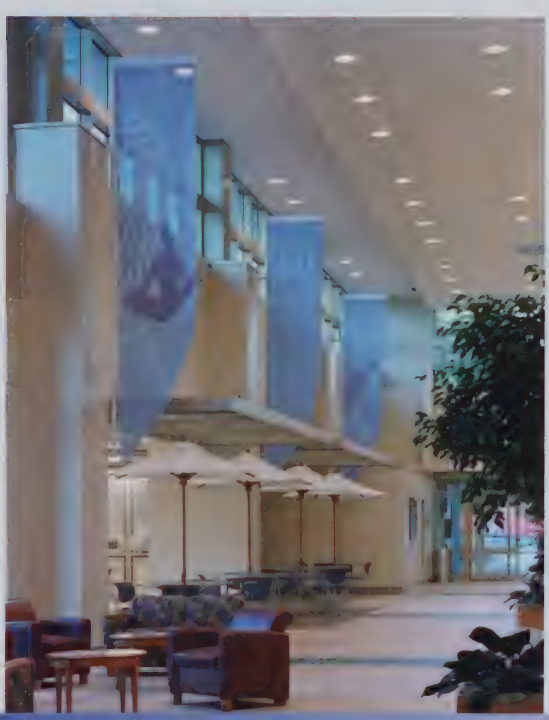
Construction manager:
William A. Berry & Son

Contractor:
D & G Industries

Consultants:
Brown Sardina (landscape); BVH Engineers (structural/civil); Available Light (lighting); Cavanaugh Tocci Associates (acoustical)

Photographer:
Edward Jacoby

The centerpiece of Stamford Health System's two-campus reorganization is the Daniel and Grace Tully and Family Health Center. This new free-standing, five-level, 225,000 square-foot facility is located on the Strawberry Hill Campus, formerly St. Joseph Medical Center. Its focus is wellness — an integration of a fitness facility with therapeutic services.







Award
D'Amour Center for Cancer Care
Springfield, Massachusetts

Client:
Baystate Health System

Architect:
Steffian Bradley Architects
Boston
www.steffian.com

Contractor:
George B.H. Macomber Company

Consultants:
AHA Consulting Engineers (mechanical/electrical/plumbing/fire protection); McNamara/Salvia (structural); VHB/Vanasse Hangen Brustlin (civil/landscape)

Photographer:
Robert Benson

The D'Amour Center for Cancer Care offers a comprehensive program of radiation and systemic oncology. The theme "Partners on Your Journey of We Being" drove every planning, design, an medical delivery decision to create a patient-focused healing environment. The collaborative process involved physicians, support staff, patients, family members, and the community.



Citation
Jimmy Fund Clinic
Boston

Client:
Dana-Farber Cancer Institute

Architect:
MDS/Miller Dyer Spears
Boston
www.mds-bos.com

Project team:
Amy MacKrell; Rebecca Miller; Stephen Paquin; Rachel Woodhouse

Contractor:
William A. Berry & Son

Photographer:
John Horner

Dana-Farber's flagship Jimmy Fund Clinic has achieved great success in pediatric oncology through transformed treatments and services for children and families. MDS worked with physicians, nurses, and administrators to renovate the 10-year-old facility, expand the space, improve clinical operations, create welcoming patient-focused environments, and provide more effective nursing and staff support areas.



Unbuilt Architecture Awards

Honor Award

79 Matthew Henning Griffith
Community Center
Camden, New Jersey

80 Joseph James
Parking Lot for Stormwater Collection and Containment
Providence, Rhode Island

81 Jason King, Mandi Lew, John Coburn
Park Slope Mikvah
Brooklyn, New York

82 Skidmore, Owings & Merrill
Tower at 400 Fifth Avenue
New York City

83 StoSS Landscape Urbanism
Silresim Superfund Redevelopment Study
Lowell, Massachusetts

84 StoSS Landscape Urbanism
Staging Mount Tabor's Renewal and Regeneration
Portland, Oregon

JURY:

Henry Moss AIA
Bruner/Cott & Associates
Cambridge, Massachusetts
(jury chair)

Michael Blier ASLA
Landworks Studio
Salem, Massachusetts

David Handlin AIA
Handlin, Garrahan, Zachos and Associates
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Nancy Levinson
Architectural Record
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Timothy Love AIA
Utile Inc.
Boston

Janet Marie Smith
Boston Red Sox
Boston

Maryann Thompson AIA
Maryann Thompson Architects
Cambridge, Massachusetts

JURY COMMENTS:

There is a pattern in the submissions over the past few years that was especially evident in 2004. Designers are preoccupied with building skins and landscape ideas, with a distressing lack of interest in architectural space or imaginative programs — a disturbing imbalance that suggests increasingly superficial design responses that do little to serve the people and places for which they are intended. We also noted a striking dearth of strong house designs and found that most of the residential submissions ignored both their landscape context and the opportunity for spatial invention within the building envelope. On a more welcome note, we were happy to see that large corporate firms are pursuing surprisingly innovative approaches to design and design research.

Editor's note: The full text of jury comments, including responses to individual projects and advice on preparing submissions, may be found at www.architects.org/awards



Honor Award
Community Center
Camden, New Jersey

Designer:
Matthew Henning Griffith
Fayetteville, Arkansas

The Center is a hub of activity within a decayed urban fabric. Primary spaces form a confluence of city infrastructure, local culture, and community need. The Center fills North Camden's programmatic voids, providing subway access, a public library, an auditorium, classrooms, art facilities, a cloistered park and market venue, shops, and an outdoor cinema.



Honor Award

Parking Lot for Stormwater Collection and Containment

Providence, Rhode Island

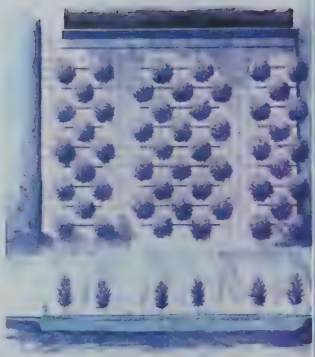
Designer:

Joseph James

Belmont, Massachusetts

This project explores the potential for soil and water remediation within a typical urban locale. Rather than an impervious asphalt plane, a steel grid system elevates vehicles over a wetland basin which collects and contains surface runoff, helping to eliminate overflow into the Providence River.







Honor Award
Park Slope Mikvah

Designers:
Jason King, Mandi Lew, John Coburn
Brooklyn, New York

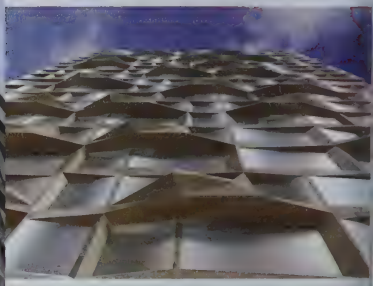
The mikvah is an orthodox Jewish ritual bath that is the contemporary incarnation of a ritual originally sited in nature. Its use is dictated by Jewish law and the lunar calendar. Here, the ritual has been augmented through the architecture by attenuating the procession to create a powerful and meaningful experience.



Honor Award
Tower at 400 Fifth Avenue
New York City

Designer:
Skidmore, Owings & Merrill
New York City

The project transforms the inherent flatness of designing enclosures for a speculative residential development on Fifth Avenue into a series of explorations on hybrid dimensions that are more than a surface but less than a volume.







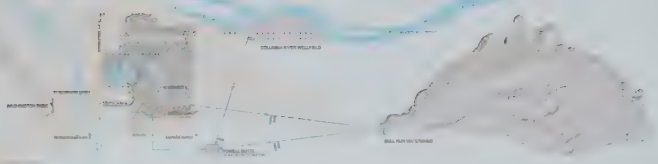
Honor Award
Silresim Superfund Redevelopment Study
Lowell, Massachusetts

Designer:
StoSS Landscape Urbanism
Boston

Associated designers:
Harvard University Center for Technology and Environment
The Bioengineering Group
TRC Environmental Corporation

This is a strategy for the social, cultural, environmental, and economic recovery of an industrial corridor and Superfund site. The strategy — which includes a stormwater processing system and a new ecological infrastructure — is staged over 20 years in order to engage participation, change perceptions, increase political pressure, and test methodologies.





Honor Award
Staging Mount Tabor's Renewal and Regeneration
Portland, Oregon

Designer:
StoSS Landscape Urbanism
Boston

Associated designers:
Taylor & Burns
Arup
Nevue Ngan Associates

This is a strategy for the re-use, renewal and regeneration of 19th-century water reservoirs. Discrete physical interventions — embankments, furrows, overlooks, boardwalks — are deployed to re-direct water and catalyze new ecological/social occupations. Implementation and management strategies support flexibility and long-term funding mechanisms in order to make the park fiscally and ecologically self-sustaining.





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Western Massachusetts AIA Design Awards

Honor Awards

87 Burr and McCallum Architects
Private Residence
Williamstown, Massachusetts

88 Juster Pope Frazier
Eric Carle Museum of
Picture Book Art
Amherst, Massachusetts

JURY:

James Estes FAIA
Estes/Twombly Architects
Newport, Rhode Island

Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA
Smith College
Northampton, Massachusetts

Gail M. Sullivan AIA
Gail Sullivan Associates
Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts

Peter H. Wiederspahn AIA
Wiederspahn Architecture
Somerville, Massachusetts

JURY COMMENTS:

After reviewing each portfolio, we paused to reflect on what struck us most about these projects. What did we deem "excellent?" Were we using excellence as a simple synonym for "innovation?" We determined that design excellence and innovation are different but connected. Either alone was worth applauding, but either alone did not merit an award. We looked for excellence in massing, scale, proportion, plan organization, craft, use of materials, and their detailing. Yet very fine, competent projects that didn't offer something new didn't resonate as strongly. We looked for projects that could teach us, provoke us, and present a strong, fresh idea. Because several projects were situated in an established cultural and building context, we also looked for work that brought something new to the vernacular. We noted that stating a strong idea was not enough, and looked for evidence that ideas were carried clearly throughout the project. Unfortunately, at times, there was loud talking but not much said. We recognized that many projects wrestled with strong constraints, and considered the responsibility of the profession to the realities of minimal maintenance budgets, extended community processes, and limited funding. Ultimately, we asked, will this project stand the test of time?

Editor's note: The full text of jury comments, including responses to individual projects and advice on preparing submissions, may be found at www.wmaia.org.

Honor Award
Private Residence
Williamstown, Massachusetts

Client:
C. Mark Haxthausen and Linda Schwalen

Architect:
Burr and McCallum Architects
Williamstown, Massachusetts
www.burrandmccallum.com

Contractor/modular home supplier:
The Home Store

Photographers:
Andy Burr FAIA (right and bottom) and Ken Gutmaker

The house was designed using prefabricated modular components that were arranged vertically instead of adopting the conventional side-by-side relationship. The components were assembled and finished on site. Corrugated metal siding, diamond-shaped asphalt composition roofing, and a bridge with pipe-and-wire railings were used to customize the modules inexpensively.





Honor Award
Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art
Amherst, Massachusetts

Architect:
Juster Pope Frazier
Shelburne Falls, Massachusetts
www.justerpopefrazier.com

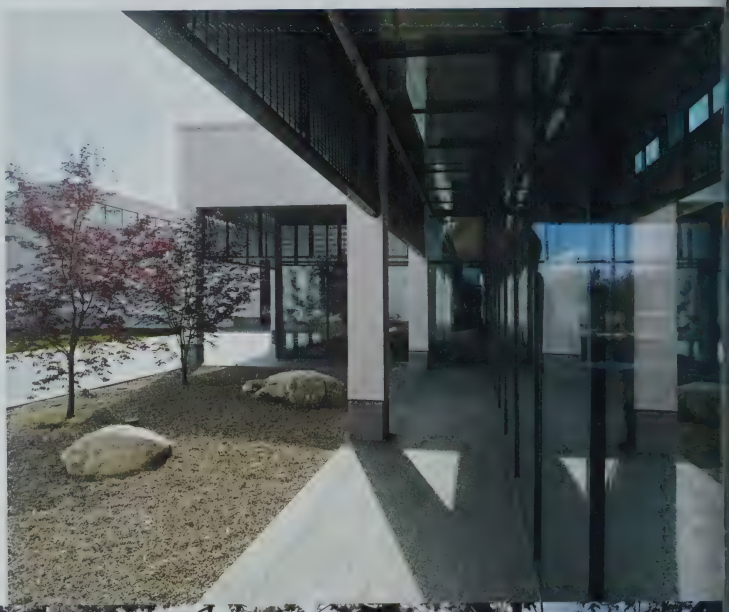
Project team:
Earl Pope (partner); Eric Gregory; Jane Spooner; Tom Hill, Assoc. AIA; Kim Erslev; Lorin Starr

Construction manager:
Daniel O'Connell's Sons

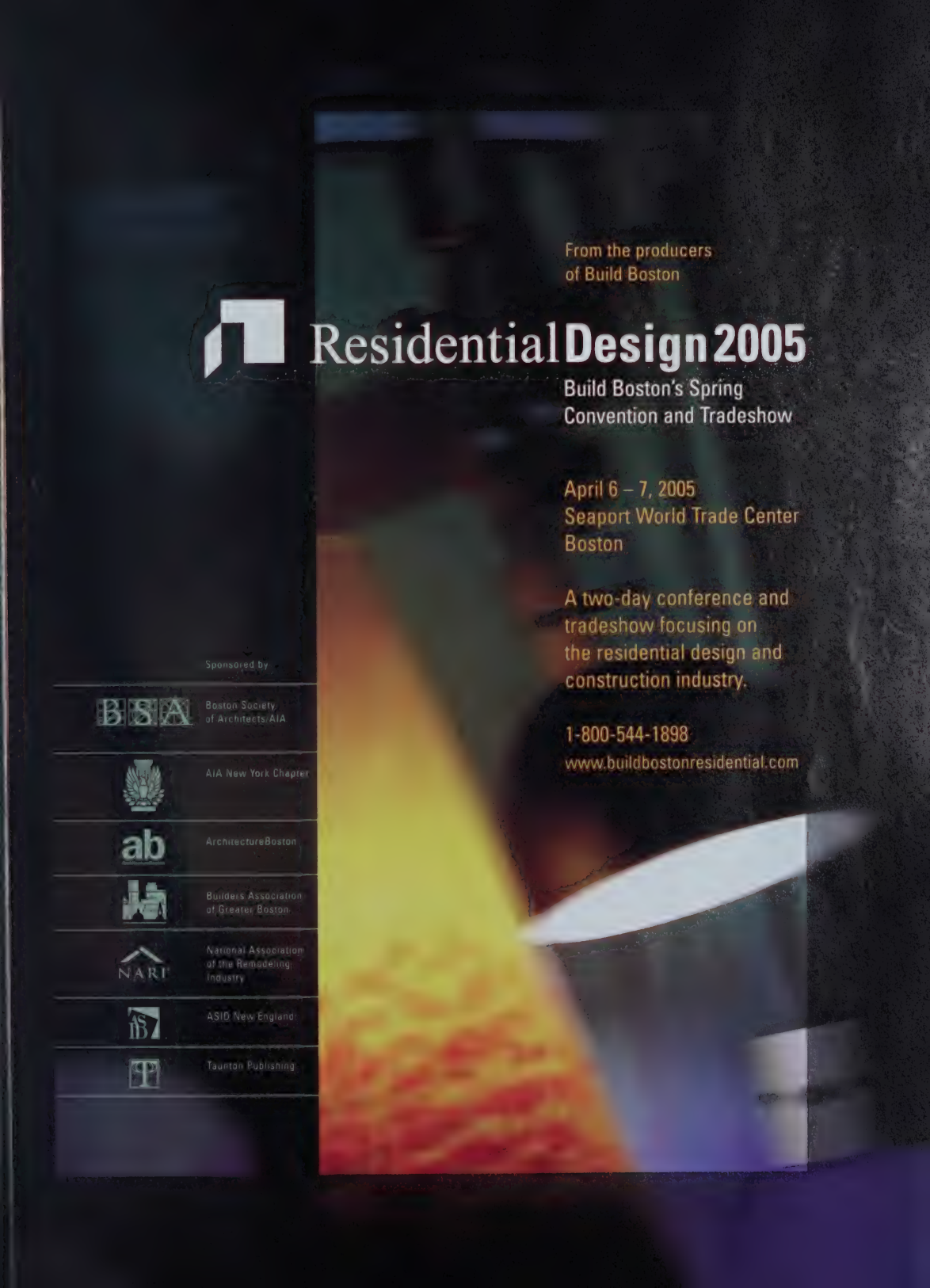
Consultants:
Cosentini Associates (mechanical/electrical/plumbing); Gibble Norden Champion (structural/geotechnical); CME Associates (civil); O'Reilly, Talbot & Okun Associates (environmental); Cosentini Lighting Design (lighting); Cavanaugh Tocci Associates (acoustical); Crabtree, McGrath Associates (food service)

Photographers:
Jim Gipe (right and bottom) and Richard Bourdeau

The Eric Carle Museum is the first full-scale museum in this country devoted to picture book art. The architect's aim was to fulfill the dream of Eric and Barbara Carle "to build ... a museum to delight, entertain, surprise, and educate." The 40,000-square-foot museum is an understated modern design composed of crisp white stucco forms.






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Special Awards

Every year, BSA members and their colleagues are honored nationally for their contributions to design, to the profession, and to the communities they serve. During 2004, such recognition included:

AIA Honor Awards for Architecture
Salt Lake City Public Library
Moshe Safdie and Associates
Somerville, Massachusetts
in association with
VCBO Architecture
Salt Lake City, Utah

West Campus Residence Halls
Northeastern University
William Rawn Associates
Boston

AIA Honor Award for Regional and Urban Design
UrbanRiver Visions
Goody Clancy
Boston

AIA Honor Award for Interior Architecture
Carol & Carl Montante Cultural Center
Cannon Design
Boston

Topaz Medallion for Excellence in Architectural Education
Stanford Anderson AIA

Elevated to AIA College of Fellows
Andrus Burr FAIA
Stephanie Mallis FAIA
Jay Wickersham FAIA

Each year, the BSA also identifies architects, colleagues, and institutions deserving special recognition for their contribution to the architectural community and to the enrichment of the built and natural environments. In 2004, the BSA conferred these honors:

BSA Award of Honor
Robert Campbell FAIA

Commonwealth Award
Citizen Schools

BSA Fellows Award for Excellence in Teaching
John Pilling AIA,
Boston Architectural Center

Women in Design Award of Excellence
Ann Beha FAIA
Marion Pressley FASLA
Martha Schwartz

Honorary BSA
Alexandra Lee, Hon. BSA
Penny Mitchell, Hon. BSA
Fred Salvucci, Hon. BSA



Left to right: Alexandra Lee, Hon. BSA; Penny Mitchell, Hon. BSA; Fred Sargent, Hon. BSA



Left to right: Stanford Anderson, AIA; Robert Campbell, FAIA



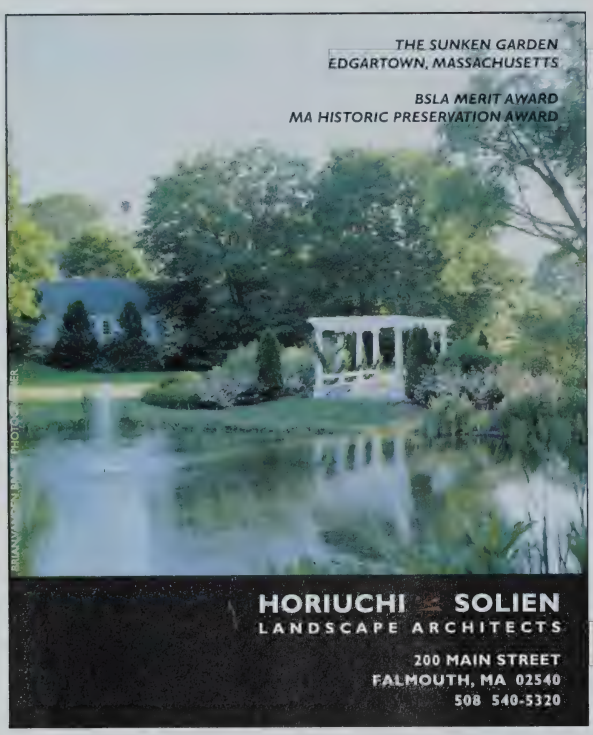
Qorvis & Gail Miniature Cultural Center



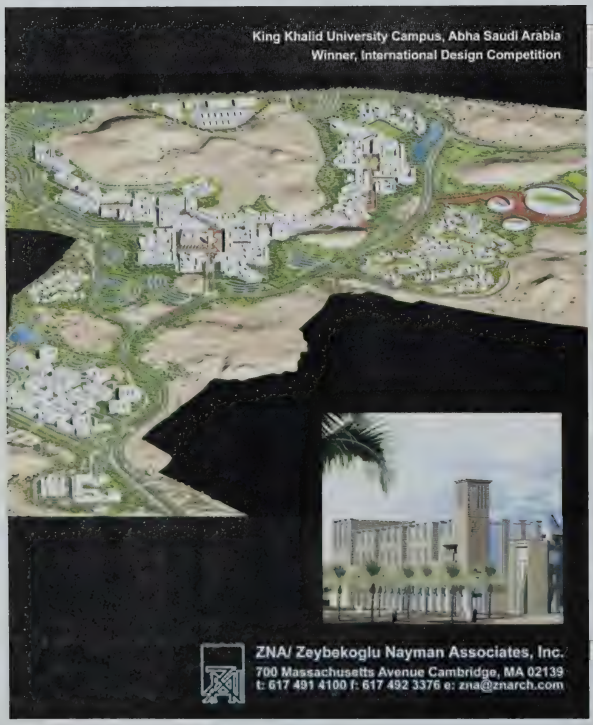
West Campus Residence Halls
Northeastern University



Salt Lake City Public Library


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MA HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARD
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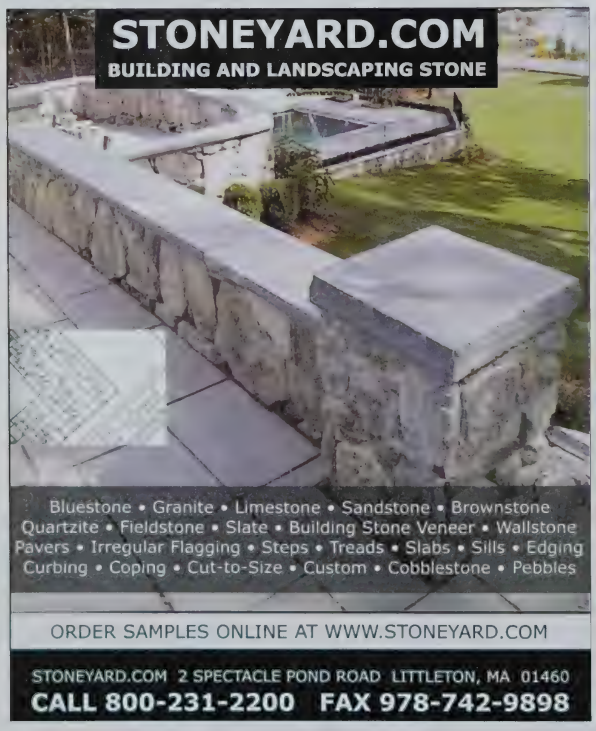
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Richard White Sons, Inc. www.rwsons.com	11
Rider Hunt Levett & Bailey www.riderhunt.com	23
Rothman Partners Architects www.rothmanpartners.com	92
SeedTree Exotic Woods www.seedtree.com	49
Service Point www.servicepointusa.com	20
Shadley Associates www.shadleyassociates.com	28
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Voigt & Schweitzer www.hotdipgalv.com	29
Westbrook Concrete Block Co. www.westbrookblock.com	4
Wood-Mode www.wood-mode.com	inside back cover
ZNA/ Zeybekoglu Nayman Associates, Inc.	92









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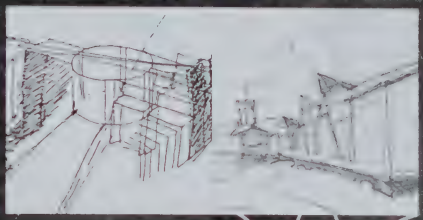


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Shadley Associates has welcomed a new principal, Pamela Shadley, ASLA. With over seventeen years of experience, Pam will provide additional expertise in waterfronts, streetscape and schools. Pam worked with the City of Bangor, Maine, on its waterfront for over four years while at CRJA.

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Copley Wolff Design Group provided landscape architectural services to Livermore & Edwards on the University of Connecticut's new North Dining Facility. CWDG's design connects the facility to major pedestrian walkways, creating activity nodes of seatwalls, ornamental trees, and seasonal planting along the way. Perimeter building plantings were also designed.

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25 Years Ago: The 1979 Harleston Parker Medal

East Cambridge Savings Bank

Charles G. Hilgenhurst & Associates



1979 HARLESTON PARKER JURY:

Graham Gund FAIA, Chair

Doris Cole FAIA

Noel Michael McKinnell FAIA

Richard L. Mullin AIA

Thomas M. Payette FAIA

H. Morse Payne FAIA

Charles F. Redmon FAIA

Paul Sun FAIA

Michael J. Washington

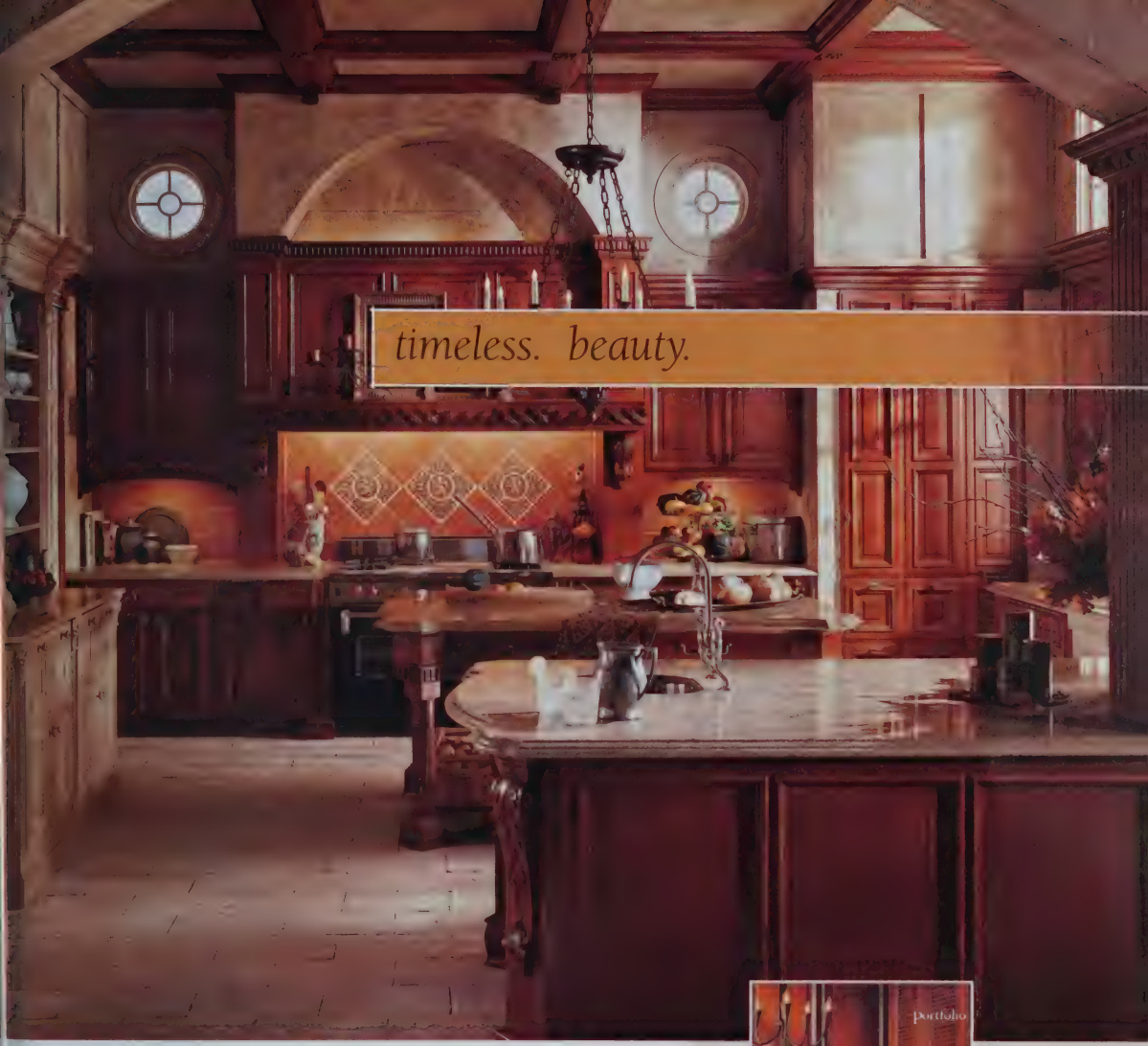
The Harleston Parker Medal, Boston's most prestigious architecture award, was established in 1921 to recognize "the most beautiful piece of architecture, building, monument, or structure within the limits of the City of Boston or of the Metropolitan Parks District."

Twenty-five years ago, the Parker Medal jury chose to honor the renovation and addition to the East Cambridge Savings Bank in Cambridge, Massachusetts, commenting:

"The Committee feels that this design is a successful combination of old and new buildings. This is an addition which is neither just a repetition of old forms used in the existing building, nor a radically contrasting statement. Rather, both approaches have been interpreted in a unique way that respects the line of the original façade and the street's edge. The open landscape area with the two-story glass wall behind it are successfully played against the more closed and massive character of the original façade, achieving an openness of expression. Although there was some feeling that the interior treatment might have been more completely developed, there was general agreement that the building has a brilliant concept, whose originality rests on a liberal reuse of the original forms."

The announcement of the Parker Medal in 1979 proved to be bittersweet; architect Charlie Hilgenhurst died at the age of 50 of a massive heart attack while on vacation a few months later. Hilgenhurst was a respected urban designer and had served as the director of design at the Boston Redevelopment Authority under Ed Logue. The East Cambridge Savings Bank reflected his urban sensibilities, as well as the era's growing acceptance of innovative, contemporary additions to historic structures. This building also launched the careers of Warren Schwartz FAIA and Robert Silver FAIA, who were recognized as the project designers when they established their own firm in 1980. ■

The winner of the 2004 Harleston Parker Medal is Simmons Hall at MIT by Steven Holl Architects with Perry Dean Rogers | Partners. See page 33.



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Associate Architect: Cannon Design
General Contractor: Skanska USA Building, Inc.
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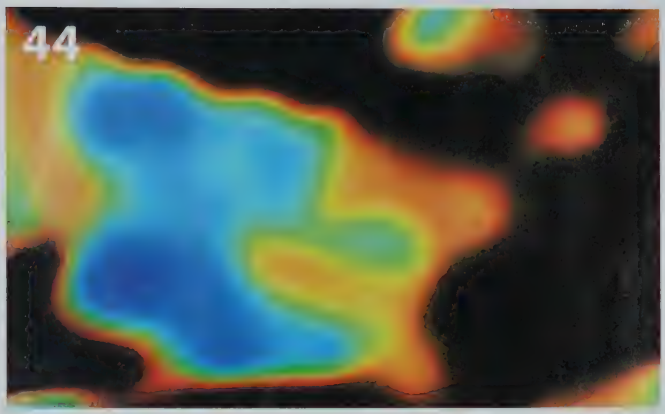
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Cover: "Four Dimensional Terrain," digital rendering by Stylianos Dritsas (SMArchS MIT, 2004) © 2004



Thermochromic film. Colors indicate the temperature levels in the film. (Photo courtesy of Michelle Addington)

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Material World

Many architects — and most design students — once consigned magazines devoted to materials to the recycling bin with nary a second thought. For one thing, they tended to be dreary. For another, they rarely conveyed much information that seemed truly startling or innovative. All that has changed dramatically. Even the mainstream popular press reports regularly on new architectural materials.

It's hard to resist the wow-factor that surrounds new materials today. You might think that we'd all be jaded by technological innovation; after all, the computer industry and its companion consumer-electronics industry have trained us to expect new techno-toys with every year. Instead, it seems to have only whetted our appetites — and our expectations — for more.

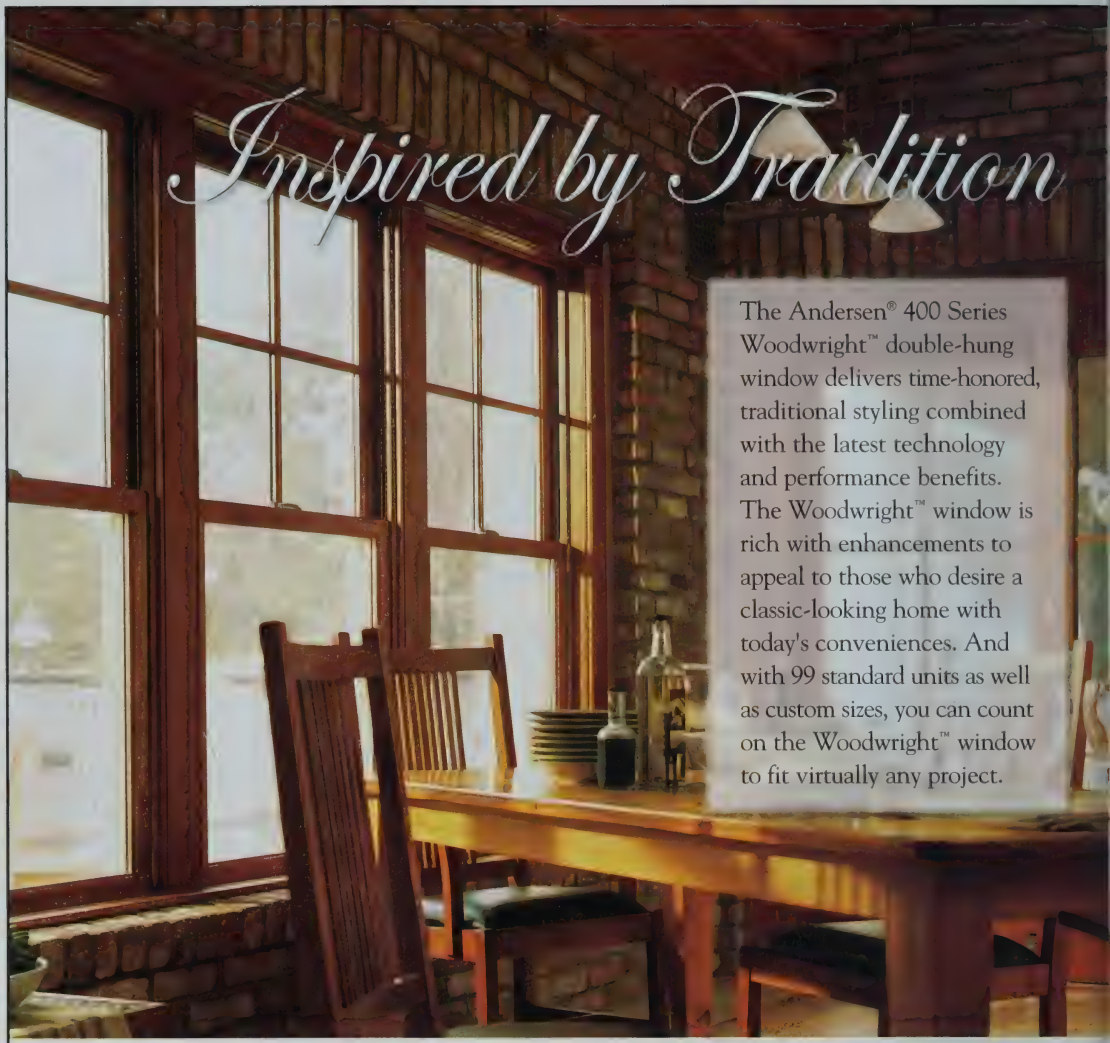
Some of the excitement surrounding new materials is due to the fact that they are so, well, material. Here at last is a new technology most of us can understand at some level, something we can see and touch. But this fascination with invention may also be hardwired into the human psyche. Public imagination has been captivated by new technology from *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* to *Fantastic Voyage* to *CSI*. It is perhaps no accident that each of these examples uses voyage metaphors (yes, even *CSI* — consider the traveling camera technique) to present new ways of seeing the natural world.

Our infatuation with new materials may bring some welcome benefits. One is a renewed respect for craft, which has been too readily dismissed as an anti-intellectual pursuit. Today, thoughtful designers are erasing that perception, not only in their own work but also through celebrated collaborations with talented craftspeople. Greater respect for craft may encourage more young people to enter the building trades, where contractors frequently bemoan the graying of skilled workers. Another benefit might be greater public and professional recognition of those who toil in the near-anonymity of consultancy, whose expertise enables remarkable feats of creativity; one example is the late Herman Protze, a Boston-based engineer who was one of the world's experts in concrete. Who knows? Maybe the "cool quotient" of new materials will ignite more interest in science education, where low levels of student achievement are a national embarrassment. But at the very least, perhaps the focus on materials will help to reintroduce us all to the pleasures of old-fashioned, unvirtual reality and to the simple joy of making things.

Here at last is a new technology most of us can understand at some level, something we can see and touch.

With this issue, *ArchitectureBoston* introduces a new feature that will appear on occasion as space and editorial whim allow: The Meme Alert. A "meme" is one of those viral ideas or concepts that seem to self-replicate: "baby on board" signs; holiday icicle lights; the current red state/blue state obsession. Although the term was coined in 1976 by Richard Dawkins, the nature of the Internet has recently made memes a hot topic; indeed, the concept of memes has itself become a meme. The design field, with its unrelenting emphasis on the "new," is peculiarly susceptible, from forms (corner turrets), to language ("intervention"), to personal style (retro eyeglasses). As transmitters of knowledge, memes of course have value. But far too often, they are false indicators of originality. So, in the spirit of exposing pretended innovation and just plain dumb ideas (think Ugg boots and bare legs), *ArchitectureBoston* hereby dedicates the Meme Alert to British scientist Karl Popper, identified by *Wikipedia* as the source of the observation, "The survival value of intelligence is that it allows us to extinct a bad idea before the idea extincts us." ■

Elizabeth S. Padjen FAIA
Editor



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Letters Letters Letters

I read the announcement that Simmons Hall at MIT won the Parker Medal [January/February 2005] with great disappointment. In my opinion, this building is an ugly, expensive, and arrogant joke. For it to receive our highest honor is disgusting (sorry about the strong words, but that's the way I feel).

This building was extraordinarily expensive to build, will be equally expensive to maintain, and will be impossible to repair, due to its design. It is outstandingly ugly, from all who have commented on it to me. This is all in striking contrast to the comments of the jury, which are all very positive, except for a few disclaimers at the beginning.

The jury notes that the building is very popular with students. However, the article immediately following the jury's comments begs to differ; it is one of the most scathing condemnations of a building I have ever read. If this is some sort of joke, I missed it. If it isn't, how does this support the award of the medal? And how could the jury come to the conclusion that it did? Did they get their report from MIT rather than bothering to check with the occupants?

This project represents the height of arrogance by the architectural profession, foisting architectural experiments on the clients who pay for them, the users, and the public who must look at (or look away from) them.

And all of this at a time when we are entering "The End of an Age of Icons," to quote the title of an article in a recent BSA *ChapterLetter*.

Aside from that, I have no opinion about the matter.

Richard Keleher AIA, CSI, LEED AP
Concord, Massachusetts

The introductions to each section in your annual awards issue [January/February 2005] do an admirable job of discerning trends in submitted work, but one significant trend goes unheralded. At a time when a majority of architectural commissions involve existing buildings, only a small handful of the awards do. In some ways, the most inventive one of all is on the inside back page: the renovation of and addition to the East Cambridge Savings Bank by Charles Hilgenhurst, which won the Harleston Parker Medal 25 years ago.

I wonder what to make of this. Restoration, rehabilitation, and adaptation of old buildings for new uses require a respect for the work of others and are accordingly less powerful works of authorship themselves. But in the age of resource efficiency, urbanism, and the search for cultural identity, they are no less worthy of recognition. Has rehab work diminished in quality? Has it been eclipsed by resurgent Modernism? Are the BSA (and other) juries biased towards new design? Or are this year's awards an anomaly?

Matthew J. Kiefer
Goulston & Storrs
Boston

Warren Schwartz and I appreciated your piece on the 25-years-ago Parker Medal recipient — the East Cambridge Savings Bank. Warren and I worked on that project in the office of Charles Hilgenhurst, along with our colleague, Bill Buckingham. My small black-and-white version of your Steve Rosenthal photo has been on a bureau at home since then. Charlie was a model boss for a couple of young architects. He was open, fair-minded and even-tempered, and utterly without the extravagant ego sometimes found in our profession. He was much more interested in having something done well than in exerting personal authority, so his office provided young architects with wonderful opportunities. Some of his selflessness may have been a function of his deep Christian beliefs. But he also tolerated my own occasional outbursts of blue language with good humor, even when they may have mystified him. Charlie was unhappy when Warren and I decided to go off on our own in January of 1980; but he dealt with our departure with the quite considerable grace with which he dealt with everything. He wished us every success, offered to help in any way possible, and gave us a magnificent Piranesi etching as a parting present. His death 25 years ago last February left us without a friend and mentor, and stole the benefits of his wise counsel.

Robert H. Silver FAIA
Schwartz/Silver Architects
Boston

In her article "Too Far from the Tree" [November/December 2004], Victoria Beach has missed the entire purpose of the American College of Healthcare Architects. Far from "going it alone," as she states, ACHA members are dedicated to the education of other architects in the intricacies and pitfalls of healthcare design and construction. They wish to share their knowledge and experience by training architects who have never done a healthcare project about the myriad codes, regulations, standards, and guidelines that they must be familiar with. They can learn from this group what the architect's role must be in, for example, an Infection Control Risk Assessment, rather than on their own in litigation.

Instead of criticizing the members of the ACHA as being "narrow-minded," Ms. Beach should praise them for their unselfish willingness to share their wisdom and for their dedication to mentorship, education, training, and certification.

J. Armand Burgun FAIA, FACHA
Kitty Hawk, North Carolina

Despite Victoria Beach's informative discussion of the Camden Yards design development "Too Far from the Tree" [November/December 2004], she missed one of the most powerful trends today in the selection process for design firms: owners are increasingly drawn to those firms that are perceived as "truly understanding the client's business." This trend has been reinforced for me over the past 10 years in the conduct of over 800 confidential owner interviews in connection with client satisfaction assessments that I have done for a variety of clients.

One of the questions I always pose to owners is: What is one of your greatest disappointments in working with design firms today? Consistently, the answer has been: They don't understand my business.

These brief observations are meant to underscore how crucial it is for architects to understand the fundamental changes that are shaping owners' thinking processes as they select design firms. To ignore that specialist firms are not held in very high regard by owners is to deny the reality of the marketplace. On the other hand, the profession will be strengthened by firms that have invested enormous energy and intellect into building a practice that does achieve a balance between specialization and sensitive design.

Richard G. Jacques AIA
Jacques Management
Collinsville, Connecticut

The topic of risk and reward, as it relates to the practice of architecture [September/October 2004], must be one of the most enigmatic in the annals of capitalistic endeavor. In most businesses, the size of the potential reward has a strong correlation to the degree of risk; but in architecture, the degree of risk frequently has no correlation at all to the potential financial reward.

It is inherent in the nature of risk that sometimes you win and sometimes you lose. If you are good at what you do, the odds are that you will win more frequently than you lose, and you'll be able to continue to play the game. The upside of risk for the developer is primarily financial gain. The downside of risk for the developer is primarily financial loss but not typically financial disaster.

For the architect, the upside of risk-taking is basically intangible. As Michael Buckley FAIA suggests ["The Architect's Currency," Summer 2002], the architect's reward for taking risk may be in the form of an enhanced reputation. Presumably, if an architect is willing to take design risk, his reputation will be enhanced, his practice will grow, and he will enjoy financial success; for example, the office of Frank Gehry. There is, however, always the downside of risk. It is quite possible for an architect to enjoy a sterling reputation among his peers and even the business community, but at the same time be on the verge of financial insolvency; for example, the offices of Louis I. Kahn and The Architects Collaborative. In architecture, it seems the upside of risk is intangible, but the downside is the very tangible possibility of financial disaster.

The game of architecture is quite different from most business ventures, in part because the rewards for taking risk are so disproportionate to the penalties. For most of us, the rewards are in the playing of the game itself. Winning the game may not be our primary objective, but losing the game is something all of us are trying desperately to avoid, because then we wouldn't be able to play anymore.

Larry Schwirian AIA
Sasaki Associates
Watertown, Massachusetts

Correction notice: The Wheeling Federal Courthouse project shown on page 23 of our November/December issue should have credited Goody Clancy as the lead design architect and HLM as the architect of record.

We want to hear from you. Letters may be e-mailed to epadjen@architects.org or sent to *ArchitectureBoston*, 52 Broad Street, Boston, MA 02109.

Letters may be edited for clarity and length, and must include your name, address, and daytime telephone number. Length should not exceed 300 words.

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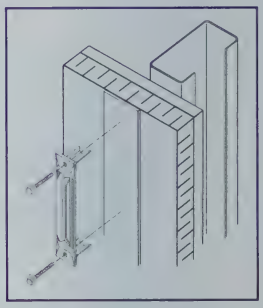
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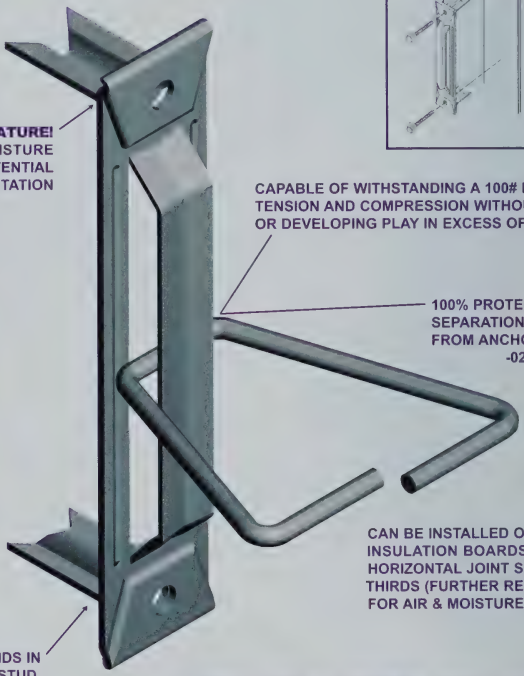
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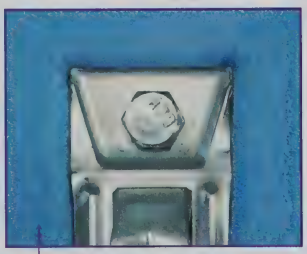




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Christian Menn's Tamins Bridge, Switzerland (1962)

The Art of Structural Design: A Swiss Legacy

MIT Museum
Cambridge, Massachusetts
September 17 – December 30, 2004

"The Art of Structural Design: A Swiss Legacy" celebrates the work of six 20th-century structural engineers: Wilhelm Ritter, Robert Maillart, Othmar Ammann, Pierre Lardy, Heinz Isler, and Christian Menn. Focused primarily on bridges, it includes landmarks of Swiss design that will be familiar to an American audience: Ammann's George Washington and Verrazano Narrows Bridges, and Menn's Leonard P. Zakim Bunker Hill Bridge.

Part of a larger project at Princeton University by renowned professor David P. Billington that includes a website, book, and lecture series, this traveling exhibition was designed with the laudable goal of exploring the "critical role of aesthetics in structural design."

Photographs of the major works of each of the six engineers are arranged chronologically, but the clear stars of the show are the eighth-scale models produced by four Princeton students.

Unfortunately, the answer to the most obvious question — why has this tiny, mountainous country produced the designers of the world's most iconic bridges? — is not to be found in the exhibition, which offers no explanatory text. For this, and other information, you will have to reach beyond the exhibition to the book and the website (www.princetonartmuseum.org/bridges).

Caroline Fitzgerald PE is the business manager at LDa Architects in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Jonathan Levi FAIA Conversations on Architecture

The Boston Society of Architects
September 14, 2004

The demographics of Harvard graduate students have changed. There was a time when they came to Cambridge with families in tow, filling Peabody Terrace's hallways and playgrounds with toddlers' footsteps. The current graduate student is most likely foreign, straight out of school, unfettered, studious, and lacking any furniture. This explains why there are fewer U-Haul trucks chipping away at the bridges on Memorial Drive each fall. It also explains Harvard's need for a new graduate-student housing model.

Jonathan Levi FAIA, an adjunct associate professor at the Harvard Design School, has completed just such a model. His Graduate Housing Complex, a gut-renovation of an early 20th-century hotel, was the focus of a recent BSA Conversation on Architecture, an informal roundtable review of an architect's work, hosted by Brian Healy AIA.

In presenting his work, Levi concentrated on his rigorous exploration of the plan, which had produced 20 unique unit plans. Working closely with the university, he distilled these into four

continued



configurations: studio, paired studio, two-bedroom, and three-bedroom faculty units. Levi believes that the more highly programmed the spaces, the more likely that they will be used. The paired studio is his most compelling invention, which in plan looks like twins conjoined at the dining nook. Throughout, built-in cabinet/bookcase/desk modules separate space, provide sound buffers, and tell you exactly where your bed will go. The dining nook is a long, narrow room with mirrored banquettes and a table. None of this can be rearranged, but you have the freedom to rotate your futon in the privacy of your own bedroom, if you're feeling frisky.

Levi's boldest move was to landscape the one-story garage roof behind the building; each faculty unit has its own "stoop" opening onto this courtyard. He then cut a three-story glazed passage through the short axis of the building that serves as a "luminous beacon" to draw people up and into the complex from the street.

Several architects at Levi's Conversation observed that the spaces seemed designed for a business traveler rather than a student; the units are so highly controlled that the interiors have more in common with a suite hotel than a dormitory. Levi's response was that graduate students are a "population in transition" — here to study, not to decorate, they would be happy to be relieved of that responsibility. If this is true, he has provided lovely, thoughtful spaces for his monkish protagonists.

Rachel Levitt is an architectural designer and researcher in Boston.

Conference: Non Standard Praxis

Massachusetts Institute of Technology
September 24–26, 2004

The Non Standard Praxis conference revealed three things: One, that "non standard" is a thinly disguised synonym for "digital." Second, that much of what constitutes non standard architecture is an infantile preoccupation with form devoid of content. Third, despite the second, some very exciting work is emerging.

While non standard architecture is pregnant with possibilities, it has so far been largely about employing digital methods in a never-ending, purely formalist quest for new expression. This trend threatens to devolve into the sort of meaningless formalism that eventually derailed Deconstructivism. This was epitomized by Ali Rahim (CAP), Hani Rashid (Asymptote), and William MacDonald (Kol Mac Studio), who each bored the audience with one irrelevant blob after another. All three might have been eclipsed by Greg Lynn (FORM), had he not cancelled just hours before his presentation.

The event was not without highlights. Mark Goulthorpe (dECOi), the conference organizer, gave the most eloquent talk, tracing the development of non standard architecture and his own beginnings. Despite his somewhat awkward built work, Kas Oosterhuis (ONL) romanced us with promises of greater control for the architect through computer-aided manufacturing.

François Roche (R&Sie...) stole the show with his irreverent manner and fo language. Beneath his self-styled ecologi cal bad-boy image, however, was a solid body of very serious work. Indeed, he was the only presenter whose practice really engaged the world outside of arch tecture and touched on social issues of any dimension. Other promising developments came from the youngest group of presenters; foremost among them wa Meejin Yoon, whose self-proclaimed treatment of the digital as a material — integral to the work but no substitute fo content — was most refreshing.

The conference left no doubt that the non standard tools of today will be very standard in the near future. The questio is whether we will wake up in 20 years to find them wasted on manufacturing mo faux-Victorian suburbs — an inevitabilit unless the non standard can pull itself away from its sophomoric fascination with formalism and deliver an architecture of substance. I can only hope that th bright lights of the current generation wi inspire the next to connect architecture with the world outside itself and use the digital as something less than a *raison d'être* but more than just a tool.

Coryn Kempster is an M.Arch candidate at MIT and an award-winning video artis who has exhibited internationally.

The Meme Alert:

Meme (meem) n. 1. A self-replicating concept or idea spread in a virus-like manner. Examples include jokes, urban legends, and fashion fads.

Meme Alert n. 1. *ArchitectureBoston*'s effort to identify memes infecting the design community.

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An Evening with a Zoning Appeals Board



The setting: Cambridge City Hall. Tonight's meeting has attracted an unusually large crowd and has been moved from a smaller room into the city council chamber. The space exudes 19th-century civic pride: stuffy, immense, dim, and solemn, with red-paisley-stenciled walls and some half-hearted Italian palazzo detailing just beneath the ceiling. An oak balustrade divides the packed spectators' gallery from the center of the room, where the five members of the zoning board sit in large leather chairs at a table.

The hearing:

7:05 The first agenda item is greeted by a rustle of eager indignation from the crowd; clearly, this is the case they all showed up for. A developer is converting a funeral home into a 15-unit condominium. The lawyer for the neighborhood association outlines the grounds for the appeal: The building exceeds the maximum floor area ratio (FAR) under the zoning code. There isn't enough parking. And the project should have been reviewed by the local historical commission under the demolition-delay ordinance.

7:25 The developer's lawyer asserts that the plans were reviewed by the city's building inspector and that the project is fully compliant.

7:40 The developer testifies that he'd originally intended to use the building for offices. But when he asked the neighbors to support a parking variance, one man replied: "Over my dead body."

8:02 The correspondence in the case file is read aloud for the record. The mayor has called the project "troublesome," and a city councilor has deemed it "an eyesore." The microphone pops every time a syllable begins with the letter "p." The crowd whispers, coughs, dozes, and quietly hisses at the few statements that support the developer's argument.

8:27 The architect testifies, so quietly that the stenographer asks him to speak up. "I want to be as transparent as possible," he repeats. He says the neighbors' photos of the project are biased, and that the building's stepped height mediates between the avenue's commercial buildings and the smaller scale of the adjoining residential neighborhood.

8:31 Two neighbors testify in support of the project. A woman who walks with a white cane announces, "I am blind," and goes on to say she can't see anything wrong with the building. The second woman says, "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder," and then returns to her seat, near the developer.

8:36 The chair asks if anyone else wants to speak in favor of the project. Nobody does.

8:37 A parade of neighbors and politicians testifies against the project. One city councilor addresses the question of whether the building's use has changed. "You could argue that a funeral home is an extension of use as a bedroom — you're just sleeping for a longer time."

The chair has asked the neighbors to confine their testimony to three minutes apiece. They follow one another with brisk precision. A sampling:

"This is not a renovation. This is a new construction that ignores scale and context."

"You can't build buildings around original buildings and argue that they're still there."

"We're not idiots. We want to be involved in the process. For some reason there was no process on this particular building, and that's why we're so angry."

"Give us back our sunset."

From a parishioner of the church across the street: "We no longer have the sanctity we once had. Yes, the cross still stands on the steeple, but it's very hard to see."

With the exception of a man wearing sunglasses who delivers a critique about limited liability partnerships and "widespread corporate misadventures throughout this country," each speaker is warmly applauded.

The murmuring from the hallway outside the chamber, where people who've shown up for other cases are waiting, keeps getting louder.

9:30 The chairman closes public testimony. He proposes a continuance, so that more information can be gathered: feedback from the historical commission; legal advice on the demolition issue; a resolution of the conflicting FAR figures that have been presented. Two other members echo the need for a continuance, but the remaining two disagree. They argue that the board's purview doesn't extend to independent investigations, and that nowhere is it suggested in the petition that the developer misrepresented the project.

10:00 The members vote 3–2 in favor of a continuance.

10:01 A question from someone sitting near the developer: Does a continuance require a simple majority of three votes or a supermajority of four?

The city solicitor steps up to the table and says that all decisions require a supermajority of four. The neighbors' lawyer argues that this rule doesn't apply to *procedural* decisions, only to the board's decisions on whether to accept or deny appeals.

After 15 minutes of debate, a board member shrugs. "The city solicitor has spoken. We have no choice."

The chair calls a five-minute recess.

The board huddles. The neighbors huddle. One neighbor keeps shouting, "I heard misrepresentations! I heard misrepresentations!"

10:24 The chair respectfully reframes the continuance motion. The vote comes in again at 3–2 — which, it is now agreed, means that the continuance motion has been defeated. "But," says the chair, "that doesn't mean it can't continue tonight."

10:29 A board member requests testimony from the building commissioner. "Why is this not a new building? Why was a demolition permit not required?"

The building commissioner: "There's no criteria in the building code to guide what constitutes demolition. I took a second look about a month ago and confirmed that demolition had not occurred."

10:45 The chair moves that the appeal be denied. The motion passes

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unanimously. Yawning and subdued, the remaining spectators stand and begin filing out of the room.

They are replaced by the people who've been waiting in the hallway for the past four hours.

10:48 No one is here to speak for or against the next matter, which has been continued from an earlier date. The board votes unanimously for a further continuance.

10:49 The petitioner in the next matter hasn't shown up. The unanimous vote for a continuance draws an exasperated murmur from a group of neighbors, one of whom speaks up. "This is the third time this matter has been postponed. Is there a way to make this fairer to the people wishing to be heard in opposition?"

10:57 The petitioner in the next matter has left. The board votes for a continuance.

11:15 The next matter, originally scheduled for 7:30, involves a couple who want to build two new bedrooms requiring dormers. The neighbors are overwhelmingly supportive — except for the lady in the ground-floor apartment across the street, who testifies that the dormers will obstruct her view. In her opinion, her neighbors already have enough room; she suggests they put their bed in the alcove, which would give them "a cozy little love-nest up there."

11:45 A string of neighbors gets up to speak in support. This is a wonderful family; everyone is so happy to have them living on the street. One neighbor doesn't understand the across-the-street lady's objections: Her front window is filled up with a giant parrot cage, so exactly what view is threatened with obstruction here?

11:55 The board votes 4–1 to grant the variance; the chair, though impressed with the neighbors' testimony, says he has to support the property rights of the lady across the street. The neighbors all hug. The parrot lady leaves alone.

Midnight The chair greets the petitioner in the next case: "Good morning." Three more cases are heard in rapid succession.

12:30 Even the clock on the wall looks bleary. The meeting is adjourned. The tape recorder is turned off. Folders full of documents from tonight's public process — contentious, witty, patient, tedious, tightly regulated, but utterly human — are tidied and put away. ■

Joan Wickersham lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She is the author of *The Paper Anniversary* and is finishing a new book.





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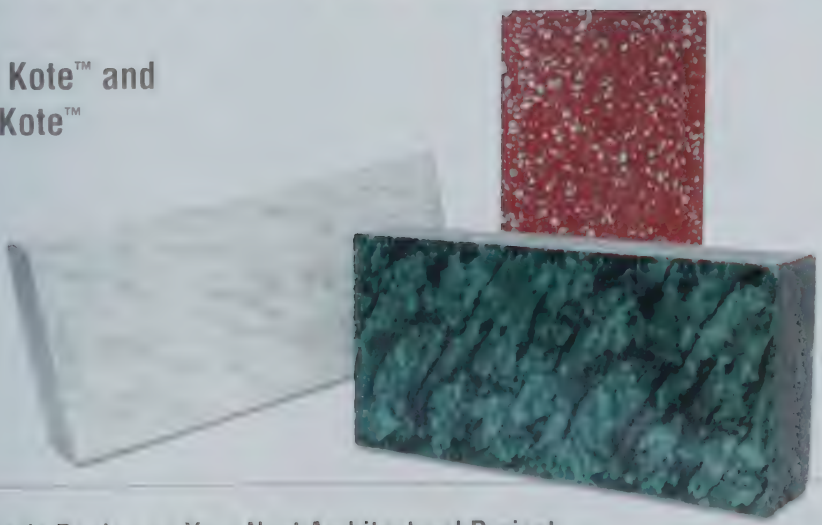
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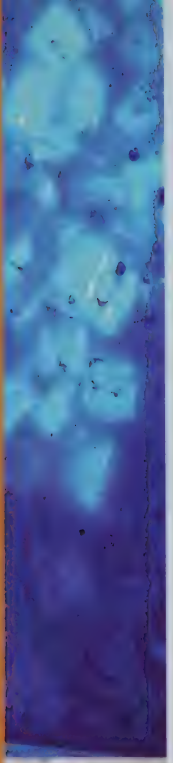
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So Many Materials, So Little Time

Elizabeth Padjen: Many recent discussions of materials have a "gee whiz" quality to them: "Gee whiz, look at this new material, isn't it cool?" There is an undeniable excitement about materials right now, but I wonder where this sudden interest came from. Are we exploring new materials just "because we can"? Did Postmodernism, where nothing was authentic, make us hungry for real materials and a real understanding of technologies and how things fit together?

Sheila Kennedy: There's been a dawning realization in the last decade that the process by which materials appear in our buildings is no longer a simple one of selection. It's more than simply asking what products are available, what they cost, what the performance issues are. Materials are culturally constructed. Although we're very familiar with glass, steel, and concrete, architecture wasn't always made of those materials. We now realize that, as culture changes and evolves, so too does our understanding of what is material.

We're seeing the emergence of several new types of materials. We have materials that are truly emissive — they emit light that can be organized as information. There is an emerging class of nano-scaled materials, such as thin films or responsive materials that react to specific conditions in the environment, which are interesting because of the very small scale at which they operate. We're also seeing a growing number of hybrid or composite materials, which are combined in a customized way to solve a specific problem.

These days, a product is not necessarily the formed object that the architect has traditionally specified; it is possible to take an existing material and modify its properties. We're

moving from the so-called "architectural materials" that we've inherited toward a broader spectrum of high-performance materials that perform in different ways.

Michael Mulhern: One of the challenges is that there are so many choices out there. The palette becomes richer every day, from materials that are active polymers to 14 types of stainless steel. From an educational standpoint, there is no way to impart any of that information in a useful manner to most students. So we as professionals, either running architecture firms or companies that sell to architecture firms, are faced with a constant educational exercise to try to get materials used in an appropriate way. At least once a week, I look at a set of drawings that I know will not get built, because the design flat out won't work, for budget or technical reasons.

Sheila Kennedy: A few decades ago, at the height of late Modernism, material choice wasn't even posed as a question. You just had these materials, they were the Modern materials, and if you wanted Modern architecture, you used them. And if you didn't want Modern architecture, you looked at more traditional materials, like brick.

What we're seeing now is a transitional period in which our culture is trying to understand the new set of materials that are available, not just in architecture, but also in clothing and consumer goods, in science and medical products. It could be the task of the entire profession — educators, practitioners, contractors — to help to make that shift. I believe that we need to develop a new set of ethical and cultural values that we can then ascribe to the materials that we're using, be they existing materials that are used in traditional or non-traditional ways, or entirely new classes of materials.

Elizabeth Padjen: One aspect of this new focus on materials is its attraction to students and young designers. What do you think is motivating students who are simply finding joy in these possibilities, who might not yet have been exposed to the whole matrix of questions and values that Sheila is proposing?

Hansy Better: I find that my students are taking on the customization of material, inventing something based on what they know or what is locally available. It leads to a sort of indigenous architecture, in which they build an architecture from hand. It's a different approach to the meaning of materials — it leads to a cultural or social exchange between different regions, even different continents. I see students looking with fresh eyes at the basics: "OK, we have dirt; let's work with dirt. And let's solidify it to make it brick."

Marc Truant: I agree with that. Young architects are very open, because they're just trying to understand everything. They don't have this matrix already set up. They say, "What materials are we working with? How are we going to detail those materials? How are we going to connect them?"

"What we're seeing now is a transitional period in which our culture is trying to understand the new set of materials that are available, not just in architecture, but also in clothing and consumer goods in science and medical products."

— Sheila Kennedy AIA

Hansy Better: And this is where authenticity comes in, because there is an idea that authenticity is associated with something that is vernacular or local. A lot of young designers are constantly trying to remove the understanding of the material only as a finished product. If you break the material, use it in different ways, or make it in different ways, you expose a quality that is more authentic, that has a closer association with the vernacular.

Dean Rutila: I see the renewed interest in materials from a different perspective. I see manufacturers exploding with new ideas in recent years — DensGlass Gold, Tyvek, modified bitumen roofing, epoxy terrazzo. A new waterproofing material from W.R. Grace is a great example. They took a latex rubber and asked, "What can we do with it?" — and then invented Procor.

The market reacts in different ways to all these products. There's the bold — maybe reckless, maybe innovative — person who impulsively says, "Let's try it." Then there's the conservative fuddy-dud like me, who says, "It's never been done, you don't want to do that." And somewhere in between is the person who takes the educated risk. And once that person tries something out and everybody else sees it, you find it everywhere.

Elizabeth Padjen: You've put your finger on one of the great ethical issues: It's one thing for us as designers or builders to experiment with new materials, but what about the owner who's ultimately taking the risk? There's a whole graveyard of new "wonder" materials.

Dean Rutila: Well, there are bold owners out there who knowingly take those risks.

Hansy Better: And smart architects.





Above and left: Ombar Lounge, Boston, 2002.
Architect: Studio Luz.

Dean Rutila: In the end, there are smart architects who build a case with the owner to try something new. And done well, the risk is taken with open eyes all around. Sometimes new ideas don't work. But when they do work, they make the front page of every trade publication.

Mark Kalin: A material can't work out of context. All the materials are part of an assembly. The young designer might want to use toothpaste as waterproofing, but no matter how enthusiastic he or she is, it's still not waterproofing. With a more experienced practitioner, the standing joke is that the cutting edge of technology is your wrist. Most owners don't want to take that risk. They're not asking their architect to risk a leaky building and poor indoor air quality, so the areas where the architect can take the risk are those areas where the architect is strongest — the shape, the form, the volume, the use of light.

Michael Mulhern: We work with people who are really pushing the limits. And that push is a lot less magical than it seems; it's all founded on good engineering. Typically, there are some people out there who have a deep knowledge of a specific material. For example, we do some glass projects that scare people who don't work in glass every day. We just finished a circular stair in Osaka for Apple stores, which is all glass — the balustrade glass is hung with small, high-strength stainless steel pieces, the treads are glass, and they're joined to the balustrade glass by titanium pucks and hardware. It's the result of an evolutionary process, and that's what is lost when it shows up on the cover of *Architectural Record* — you don't know that we had already done a similar one in New York that's straight and an earlier one with a more traditional steel frame instead of the glass balustrade. When it's published, it looks like it's on the cutting edge, when it's really part of a progression.

Mark Kalin: Are we saying then that it's OK to trust you to find the right material?

Michael Mulhern: Well, no. We have an informed discussion about what the right material is, and that discussion is not technical alone. It's technical, it's financial, it's aesthetic. And each one of us around the table has a different voice in that discussion, none of which can be discounted or the owner in the end will simply say, "No, I don't want to do it." That's been my experience, anyway. The decision process needs to be evolutionary, too, and needs to include a great deal of trust.

John Ochsendorf: This brings up a key issue in innovation and materials, which is the question of specialization and who holds the expertise. Michael's firm has been able to do many things in glass and other materials that are quite impressive. Because that firm has pursued a systematic, decades-long research investigation, they have become experts in that field. It's a pattern that you see if you look back a few hundred years. The engineers who proved to be the most innovative often focused on one material their whole career, and then found forms no one else could have imagined before — such as Eiffel with iron, or Nervi and Maillart with concrete. Another example might be Shigeru Ban, who is building large-scale structures in paper. I think there is a real opportunity for specialists, who maybe aren't architects, but who focus on particular materials, develop those, and then work as consultants. Without that expertise, the idea of innovating is fraught with danger.

Sheila Kennedy: But if architecture isn't a discipline for which an expertise in materials is required, then I'm not quite sure what would be! Because architecture has been a profession that's really about innovation in materials — these are in fact the things out of which one makes form, the medium by which architecture is experienced. But I understand your





Above: Pressure Responsive Body Mat. Kennedy & Violich Architecture. Resilient gel with cast LED modules and reflective diffusers.

Right: Stair detail, Apple store, SoHo, 2002. Stair engineering: Dewhurst Macfarlane and Partners. Component engineering and fabrication: TriPyramid Structures. Design architect: Bohlin Cywinski Jackson.

caveat. Maybe architects will need to specialize in certain areas of material if the profession as a whole is to continue to claim a broad knowledge of material culture.

This conversation has a slight sense of an antagonism between innovation and performance in buildings, which we've talked about in terms of our responsibilities to owners. But I suggest that if an architect is going to use a new material, say it's textile-reinforced concrete or a carbon-fiber structural reinforcement, there has to be an added value for the owner as well as for those who will use the building. I don't think that material innovation is about pure aesthetics. It's part of an overall value proposition. There is a risk and there is a return. And I think architects need to understand the risk-return proposition as clearly as anything else. How is the construction budget going to be spent? That requires a certain kind of focus. This may suggest the invention of multiple kinds of usefulness for the material we use. But more significantly, I don't see this same clash over innovation in other fields, such as medicine, engineering, or electronics.

Wagdy Anis: Innovation and performance should progress together toward a solution. If you can do some analysis of how a material is going to behave under your conditions, you can reasonably predict success or failure and diminish the risk.

Michael Mulhern: We see very different approaches between our institutional clients and commercial customers. Institutional clients, for example, are often ahead of the curve in green building, because they know they're going to own this building cradle-to-grave. The economic life cycle of a commercial building is probably closer to five years. That has a profound impact on the way owners look at sustainability issues and on the way they assess risk-reward issues.

Elizabeth Padjen: What about the question of policy? A lot of the green discussion has been driven by policy. People are building sustainable structures out of a certain degree of altruism, a larger quest for payback, but perhaps mostly because of public policy that, through building codes, energy codes, and other standards, forces a certain kind of response.

John Ochsendorf: I don't see public policy really shaping the green building issue in the United States, certainly not yet. In the United Kingdom, where they're going to reduce CO_2 emissions by 60 percent in the next 50 years, it is driven by policy, because everyone in the building industry is accountable for their CO_2 emissions. We are a decade or two away from that in this country.

Marc Truant: You could have a policy decision saying we will reduce CO_2 emissions, but we're a capitalist society and it may take economics to drive the change.

John Ochsendorf: But we do need to think in these broad terms. The exciting new opportunities in materials may be in mining the existing waste streams of our very wasteful society. I read recently that there is nearly as much copper in the built environment as in the natural environment. Construction waste is a significant part of our waste stream. But it's not just about recycling aluminum or steel; it's about starting to look for new materials by, for example, mining plastics from PCs. We have 600 million desktop computers in the United States alone — that's a highway from here to California 60 feet wide. I think architects can be a big driver in this area by demanding that we start to look at the waste outputs of society. Because what's our model now? We go and dig up a mountain.

Michael Mulhern: I would maintain that that's a piece of what we need to do, but the mandate for designers is actually slightly

"In the next century, as we start to address true costs of these materials, you're going to see vast changes in the way that we choose and use materials. And we may move back toward local materials."
— John Ochsendorf

different. We have clients who sit at the top of the food chain, and clients demand that we provide a building to meet some functional and budgetary requirements. When the risk-reward equation is right for the clients, they will say that they want, say, a 70-percent-recycled product. As designers, we need to encourage clients to move toward that goal. But we can't drive it. We can only prod.

Hansy Better: A lot of that sort of cultural shift actually starts in academia. Heading toward that model would mean structuring design studios in the schools to think less about the design process itself and more about cyclical design, meaning imagining buildings from the very moment that you build them to the point when they're demolished or otherwise transformed. A recent student competition did just that — it required students to think through the beginnings of materials, imagine recyclable materials, and project the building life cycle. So I don't think it necessarily starts with the client. I actually think it more often starts with an approach to design. All design firms need to adopt a cyclical way of thinking about design.

Michael Mulhern: A whole life design.

Mark Kalin: That doesn't include a landfill at the end.

Elizabeth Padjen: But doesn't it also require a different way of looking at the economics? We're starting to think of life-cycle costing, a fundamentally different way for people to think about how they build. Now as more people talk about industrial ecology, there's more awareness of what happens to products and materials over their life, not necessarily the life of the building. It's starting to influence the preservation field in interesting ways. For example, old windows are often replaced because they're not energy efficient. But when you consider the embodied energy of the new windows — the energy spent to produce and transport them — it may make more sense to reuse what's there. And that's where private and public goals start to clash.

Marc Truant: Take the price escalation in steel in the past year — steel studs now cost twice what they did a year ago. One of the main reasons for that is one of the large coking coal mines in West Virginia went down because of a big fire; coking coal is used in the processing of high-grade steel, so now there's much more need for scrap metal to produce this steel. And the Chinese demand for steel is so large that they were already consuming large quantities of scrap steel. So there's a case where we're mining the waste stream, but even so, prices are going up.

John Ochsendorf: These economic issues are fundamental. I'm from West Virginia, where mountain tops are being scraped off to reach the coal to light office buildings in New England. The cost of coal in the US is about $30 a ton. If you look at true cost in terms of health and the environment, it's about $150 a ton. In the next century, as we start to address true costs of these materials, you're going to see vast changes in the way that we choose and use materials. And we may move back toward local materials.

Mark Kalin: We may find that we're working in a farmer's market environment — the challenge for the architect may become to go to Home Depot that day and see what's available, because the marketplace decided what it could deliver most efficiently to that area.

Elizabeth Padjen: Who is "we"? We've mentioned increasing specialization in the building industry. Who has the knowledge at both the micro- and macro-level to really drive some of these changes and make some of the decisions?

Mark Kalin: We all have a little piece of it. If you talk to major contractors, they've got 6,000 projects and know what materials cost in which part of the country. But they still want the architect to pick the material.

Marc Truant: We have to collaborate or we're not going to get to where we want to be. How do we get there if people aren't open to having these discussions of materials? There's no way one person can know it all.

Elizabeth Padjen: There's one aspect of materials that we haven't really touched on, which is the use of materials as ornament. There are different manifestations of that, of course, from decorative stylistic issues, to the role of luxe in our culture, to the near-fetishization of materials. How much of the current interest in materials do you attribute to their role in ornamentation?

Michael Mulhern: That's an interesting question because even though we've just spent a good bit of time discussing green

issues, most of what we consider high-tech materials have nothing to do with green projects. They have to do with an owner wanting a feature. Your question, I think, is a touch loaded. I'm a little sensitive to this because often those features are the reason I get involved in a building. People flock to the Apple stores, for example, because their design presents an integrated whole. And while our use of glass and titanium may be ornamentation, and it may represent the architects exercising their creative spirit, it is also a very conscious economic decision on the owner's part.

Hansy Better: I think we are beginning to deal with materials in a way that goes beyond ornament — in a way that is more self-consciousness, that conveys an awareness of place. A material, through its tactility, can create a very sensuous environment. Tactility creates an awareness or a memory of place. Where did that material come from? How is it being used to create some form of awareness?

Sheila Kennedy: Isn't this another dichotomy that we've all inherited from Modernism? Performance and ornament, "function" and "feature" as if those were separate? What about light-emitting diodes? You can program them to run in different paces and pattern sequences — they're digital light, so there's instantaneous on-off control with a spectrum of 1.1 million discernible colors. If this country adopted LEDs in general lighting applications, we would reduce global carbon emissions and save billions of quads of energy and billions of dollars per year. I think new materials are allowing us to see a new synthesis of terms that we previously considered to be irreconcilable.

Michael Mulhern: But any one of us is not going to force LEDs onto a broad population. They're coming, as a matter of economics as well as design. I think our goal as designers is not to shun them, and not necessarily to embrace them whole-hog at the expense of a project, but to know that they're out there. It's evolutionary.

Dean Rutila: If we can force digital television on people, why can't we force LEDs?

Wagdy Anis: I think it's going to happen. LEDs in particular are going to be the next generation of lighting; they are not going to be a fad. Their use will be driven by both function and energy conservation. But they won't be introduced just because they save energy; they've got to do the job. And I think that is a key aspect of the evolution of architectural materials and products: enhanced performance. How else do we see human comfort evolving in the future?

Mark Kalin: You can have addressable wallpaper, so you can read your e-mail on the wall. You can have translucent concrete block with the fiber-optics in it. You can have clothes that will wake you up instead of your alarm clock because they get brighter until you wake up. But how do you evaluate really meaningful progress? If you were giving awards for materials, you'd need the

"I think we are beginning to deal with materials in a way that goes beyond ornament — in a way that is more self-consciousness, that conveys an awareness of place."

— Hansy Better

10-second award, the one-year award, and the 10-year award. The 10-second award is, Wow — did you see that? It's about the feature. The one-year award is, Does it make people more productive? Does it make them happy? Does it keep them warm? And then the 10-year award is, Will it last for 100 years? These three things are in conflict, but we need all of them.

Dean Rutila: If you look back a decade, what material should have won the 10-year award?

Michael Mulhern: Coatings.

Sheila Kennedy: The discovery of the blue phosphor in 1996. This was the missing semiconductor material needed to make efficient white light. It marked the end of "bulb culture" and the beginning of the paradigm of digital light.

Elizabeth Padjen: Trex — the recycled material that is used for decks everywhere. You could consider it an ersatz synthetic lumber, but in fact, it's almost part of the vernacular now.

Wagdy Anis: Glass. Coatings on glass have made a huge difference. And the evolution in glass technology has been extremely dramatic in controlling solar energy and heat gain and comfort. It hasn't stopped; the demand for added technology in glass is going to increase in the future.

Dean Rutila: I mentioned Tyvek and DensGlass Gold earlier. Engineered wood appeared in the last 20 years, in response to the fact that we cut down all the big trees. Polymer chemistry has produced modified bituminous products, polymer coatings, elastomer coatings — all those things have exploded in the last decade. The future is going to be all things energy — do you really believe energy costs aren't going to double in the next 10 years?

Wagdy Anis: At the same time, the desire to save energy can lead us down some unnecessary paths. Take double

façades, for example, which the Europeans first developed. I think they're becoming a fad over here. To my mind, it's just silly imitation. They're not used in response to their original purposes — providing more interior cheerfulness in gloomy climates, or reducing or even eliminating mechanical systems and maximizing natural ventilation and nighttime cooling. Real needs like those push the evolution of systems and materials, and that to me is architecture. I am truly bothered by the mindless mimicking of some European architecture, without understanding the drivers.

John Ochsendorf: We're still guilty of getting excited about new materials just because they're new. I can't tell you how many times I've had students come to me very excited to do a whole project out of carbon fiber, because that's the future because it's so lightweight. Carbon fiber is very good for repairing deteriorating structures, but I don't think it's great for making floor systems and columns. Its embodied energy is tremendous. Sometimes the students — and designers — forget to ask what the really important characteristics are. More and more, as we look at energy costs, materials that have very high embodied energy may not come to fruition the way we expect.

Sheila Kennedy: And that might be one of the important criteria for material selection that emerges as a larger cultural understanding of materiality begins to develop.

John Ochsendorf: At some level, material criteria are a cultural issue. We have this crazy arrogance that when we build something it's somehow frozen in time. But if you look at geological time, the life of a building lasts but a second. I work on Gothic cathedrals in Europe that are a thousand years old now. It turns out that pinnacles on Gothic cathedrals need to be replaced every 200 years, because of weathering. What do you do when a pinnacle wears out? You don't wrap it in carbon fiber. You don't put a stainless steel rod in the middle of it. You go down to the same quarry where you got the original stone. You carve a new pinnacle. You take the old one down, and you put the new one up. There's no question that we look at those buildings as if they're permanent, and they are, compared to most of what we're building today. But the point is that we have to start to consider the lifetimes and the performance of every building, product, and material. The designers of cars and computers are already doing this — they're designing for repair, maintenance, and disposal. But there are huge inefficiencies in the way we consume buildings.

Buildings are waste in transit. We mine natural resources to produce them, and then they stand for maybe five years, maybe 500 years. But eventually they end up somewhere else. Architects don't like to hear their buildings being called trash, but the fact is that we do have to consider these material flows. And that's going to lead to changes in the way we choose materials. Otherwise, regulation may force us to. Nothing you see around you is permanent. ■







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Where Is Your House From?

BY MARK KALIN FAIA, FCSI AND PAUL STEVENSON OLES FAIA

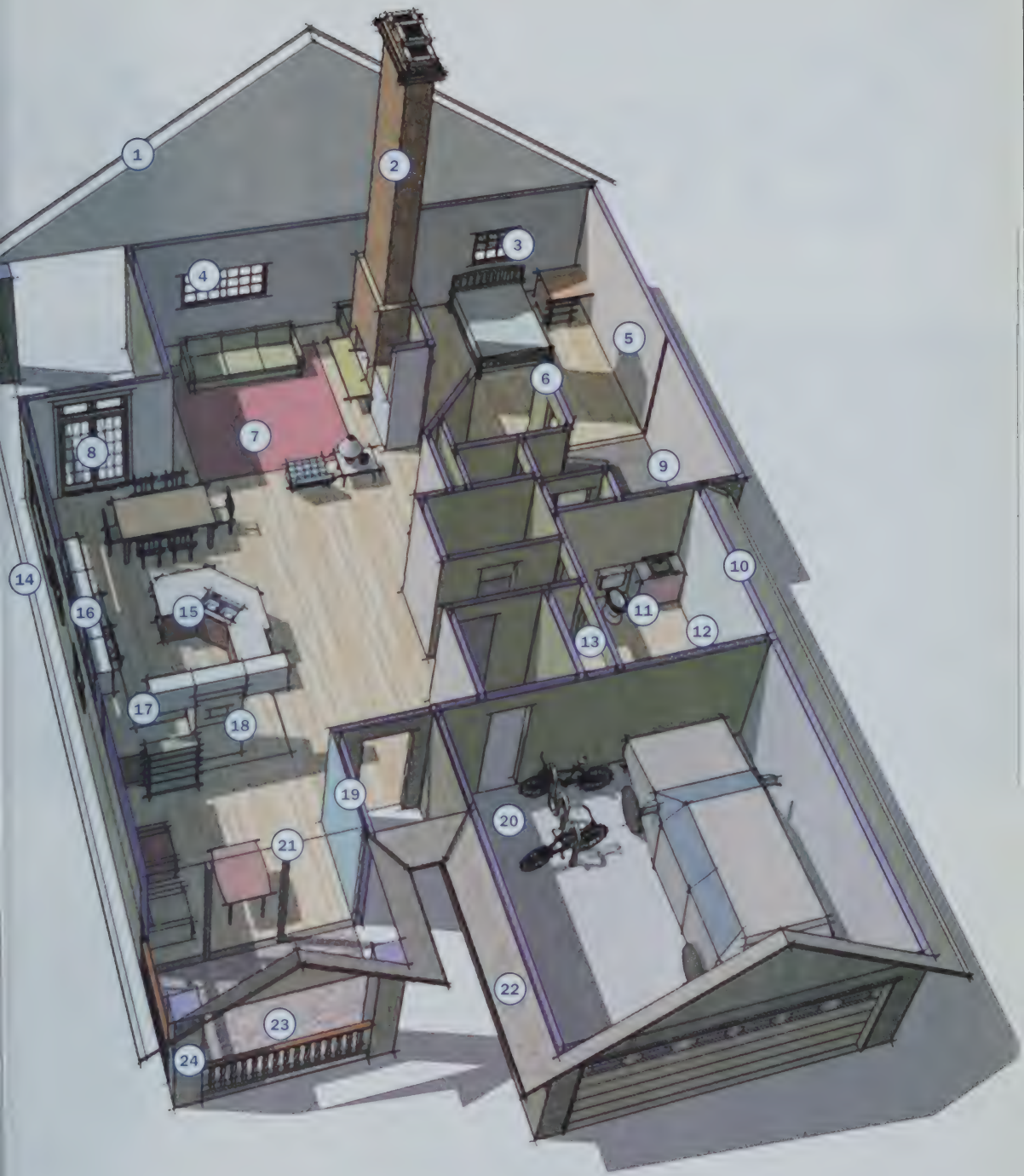
Where does your house come from? The global economy isn't just automobiles and electronic equipment. The products in our homes also come from all over the world. Consumer choices are usually based on the cost and aesthetics of what is available at the local mega-home-improvement store. Designers selecting products on the Internet or with the assistance of a manufacturer's representatives have an even broader menu to choose from.

What does this drawing tell us? That our homes are a blend of a world effort to manufacture and sell products. It's easy to jump to the conclusion that "Buy America" has been forgotten; the outsourcing of manufacturing jobs should be no surprise. This drawing really illustrates the fact that we have choices. As architects and designers, we need to take our responsibility for product selection beyond aesthetics, cost, and performance — we need to take a close look at the label. As we balance form, function, cost, and source, we also shape the global economy. ■

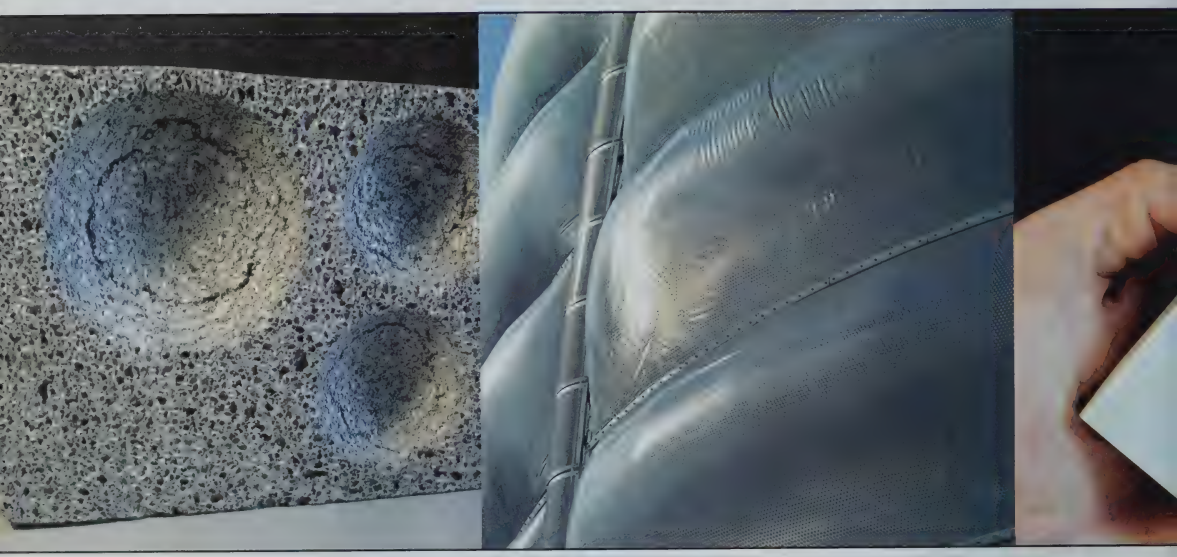
Mark Kalin FAIA, FCSI is a principal of Kalin Associates, specifications consultants in Newton, Massachusetts.

Paul Stevenson Oles FAIA is an architect and perspectivist in Newton, Massachusetts. The recipient of a Loeb Fellowship, he received an AIA Institute Honor for distinguished achievement in the field of architectural delineation. He currently conducts workshops in hybrid imaging and SketchUp software, which was used to produce this image.

1 **Wood framing** Canada
2 **Brick** USA
3 **Window blinds** China
4 **Windows** Canada
5 **Wallboard** USA
6 **Ceiling fans** China
7 **Carpet** USA
8 **Entry doors** USA
9 **Linoleum/Rubber flooring** Europe
10 **Fiberglass insulation** USA
11 **Toilets** Mexico
12 **Ceramic/Stone tile** China
13 **Shower heads** Taiwan
14 **Aluminum gutters** USA
15 **Faucets** China
16 **Microwave oven** Malaysia
17 **Kitchen cabinets** USA
18 **Dishwasher** Europe
19 **Paints** USA
20 **Concrete foundation** USA
21 **Glass** USA
22 **Roof shingles** USA
23 **Quarry tile** Mexico
24 **Red cedar siding** Canada


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Emerging



BY JOHN E. FERNANDEZ AIA

Why is there so much interest in new materials? We can blame a long list of culprits that together have contributed to a cultural buzz that places the material of a thing at the center of the discussion about the meaning of that thing. Consider just these recent examples: the museum installations "Mutant Materials" at MoMA, "Immaterial/Ultramaterial" at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, and "Solos: Smartwrap" at the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum; the Material ConneXion showroom and materials library in New York City; the "Materials Monthly" service of Princeton Architectural Press; the website architonic.com; and *Environmental Building News*.

While most construction materials have not changed dramatically since the industrial revolution, many new materials have been introduced, notably the aluminum alloys and polymers (plastics). As designers have been wrestling with the pragmatics of the application of new, the *meaning* of these materials, especially new materials, has proven elusive. Finding enduring meaning has become a pervasive topic in the ebb and flow of dominant cultural themes that include omnipresent and aggressive media,

Materials

A brave new world requires brave new materials



From left: Foamed aluminum. ETFE film (ethylene tetrafluoroethylene. National Space Centre Exhibition and Research Complex, Leicester, England, designed by Grimshaw) Glass ceramic. Composite board samples. Unprocessed sisal fiber

information technologies, virtual and technologically augmented realities, and identity tagging and surveillance. New and unfamiliar materials figure prominently in the collective psyche of our very modern world. The presence of polymers, composites, synthetic fibers, ultra-lightweight metals in our automobiles, appliances, clothing, and homes makes us aware, sometimes only vaguely, that the material world has changed and continues to change.

While some have dismissed this interest as fetishism of the modern object, the situation is more complex and interesting. In fact, while the material world has changed irreversibly, general attitudes about our relationship to contemporary materials have also shifted no less dramatically. As consumers and designers, we are more aware and more apt to think twice about the origins, actual utility, eventual disposal, and other "impact issues" that are inherent to the processes and properties of the materials we use. This engagement with the origins and outcomes of our material consumption implies an opportunity for change — a new way of conceiving contemporary material artifacts. Although there has been a great deal of writing about the lost craft of building, there is also a great deal of creativity focused on a new contemporary craft of materials. One can

While architects are voicing growing interest, they are also demonstrating broad ignorance of the opportunities that will come with the next wave of emerging materials.

even suggest that this new craft has already emerged as a vibrant collection of innovative processing technologies using materials not traditionally applied to architectural assemblies. Composites, for example, are frequently produced through a pultrusion process in which fibers are combined with a polymer matrix and pulled through a computer-controlled production line that allows for easy customization in a vast array of structural shapes. The pultrusion industry is flourishing and a new craft for assembling these components is evolving.

This growing awareness of impact issues and the potential for meaningful change in construction methodologies indicates that the interest in new materials originates in deeper sources and stronger motivations than the mere allure of the new would suggest. However, simple interest is not enough to drive real innovation. Architects have shown a consistent level of enthusiasm and a disappointing inability to direct the leading edge of technology innovation in the service of design. A literature review of the latest work in new materials for buildings reveals a dominant contribution by engineers, especially mechanical and civil engineers, and an almost complete absence of the architect's voice. In fact, it is not too dramatic to suggest that, while architects are voicing growing interest, they are also demonstrating broad ignorance of the opportunities that will come with the next wave of emerging materials. While engineers are discussing and conducting research regarding novel property attributes of structural glass, next-generation engineered timber, ductile concrete, and natural fiber-reinforced thermoplastics, architects are stuck in the descriptive language of "materiality."

What then are the materials that have the potential to contribute novel attributes to the making of architecture? The following brief list outlines some emerging materials that will become increasingly commonplace. Some of these materials already exist in products on the market; others will not be seen in buildings for many years to come.

Metals

Extraordinary ductility, strength, hardness, durability, conductivity, and ease of processing are just some of the qualities that make metals a critical material in most industries. Metals are also abundant and easily processed — of 92 elements, 68 are metals. Emerging metals include: foamed metals; fire-resistant steels; ultra-lightweight metals (such as magnesium); metal/polymer composites; and a continuing variety of metal/metal and metal/ceramic composites.

Foamed aluminum is the most common cellular metal produced in the US. Its cellular structure makes it an ideal material for impact-energy absorption, heat exchange, and lightweight structural applications. Ultra-lightweight metals include advanced aluminum alloys, titanium, and magnesium. Magnesium is particularly interesting for its improved strength-to-weight ratio over aluminum, its abundance (it is the eighth most common element on earth), and its ease of casting and forming. Even more familiar metals merit another look: Steel with greater fire resistance has been recently developed through the addition of molybdenum, niobium, and vanadium. Certain formulations show an *increase in strength* when exposed to temperatures between 150 and 400 degrees Celsius.

Polymers

Polymers comprise an enormous array of materials that have proven extremely useful in practically every modern industrial enterprise; they include thermoplastics, thermosets, and elastomers. The successful development of polymers has been the result of one of the earliest and best organized large-scale partnerships between materials science research and commercial product development, initiated in the early 20th century. The latest polymers are available as high-density plastics, sheet and film plastics, and a variety of nonwoven and composite textiles.

High-density plastics include materials like Delrin and Hytrel and other acetal and epoxy resins and polycarbonates. These plastics are generally highly resistant to UV radiation, possess high strength and good fatigue resistance, and are relatively affordable. The Meteon exterior rainscreen panel, produced by Trespa, is an example of the architectural use of a high-density resin plastic.

While engineers are discussing and conducting research regarding novel property attributes of structural glass, next-generation engineered timber, ductile concrete, and natural fiber-reinforced thermoplastics, architects are stuck in the descriptive language of "materiality."

Polymers in films and sheets are a growing segment of the market. ETFE film — a very durable, strong, UV-resistant polymer — has been used on a number of building projects as a glass substitute. Polyamide sheeting (nylon), now marketed by Certainteed as MemBrain, is called a "smart" vapor barrier for its ability to change its vapor permeability under various conditions.

Ceramics

Ceramic materials, typically defined by their singular lack of ductility (they cannot be hammered, bent, or stretched) and high silica content, include fired brick and tile, stone, concrete, plaster, and glass. One recent introduction is Ductal, a ductile concrete that is the result of a research consortium led by materials producers Bouygues and LaFarge. Ductal possesses a significant ductility due to the inclusion of very small steel fibers and performs very well in structural applications without the addition of rein-

forcing steel bars. Innovation in the production of glass ceramics has produced high-strength, nonporous, durable materials that can serve as metal substitutes. One example is Corning's Macor, a machinable glass ceramic.

Composites

Polymer and ceramic composites were the first very high-performance fiber-reinforced materials and were born of the needs of the aero- and astronautical industries of the mid 20th century. Today, composites constitute the largest category of architectural materials and include fiberglass, particle boards of all kinds, resin terrazzo, aluminum composite materials (ACMs), steel-reinforced concrete, and many others. The most interesting new composites are those that perform as a "material assembly," that is, a combination of materials that produces the same or better result than an actual assembly of separate components. One example is Georgia Pacific's DensGlass Gold, a fiberglass-and-gypsum combination used as weather-resistant sheathing board. A new generation of composite boards promises to change the nature of the exterior envelope.

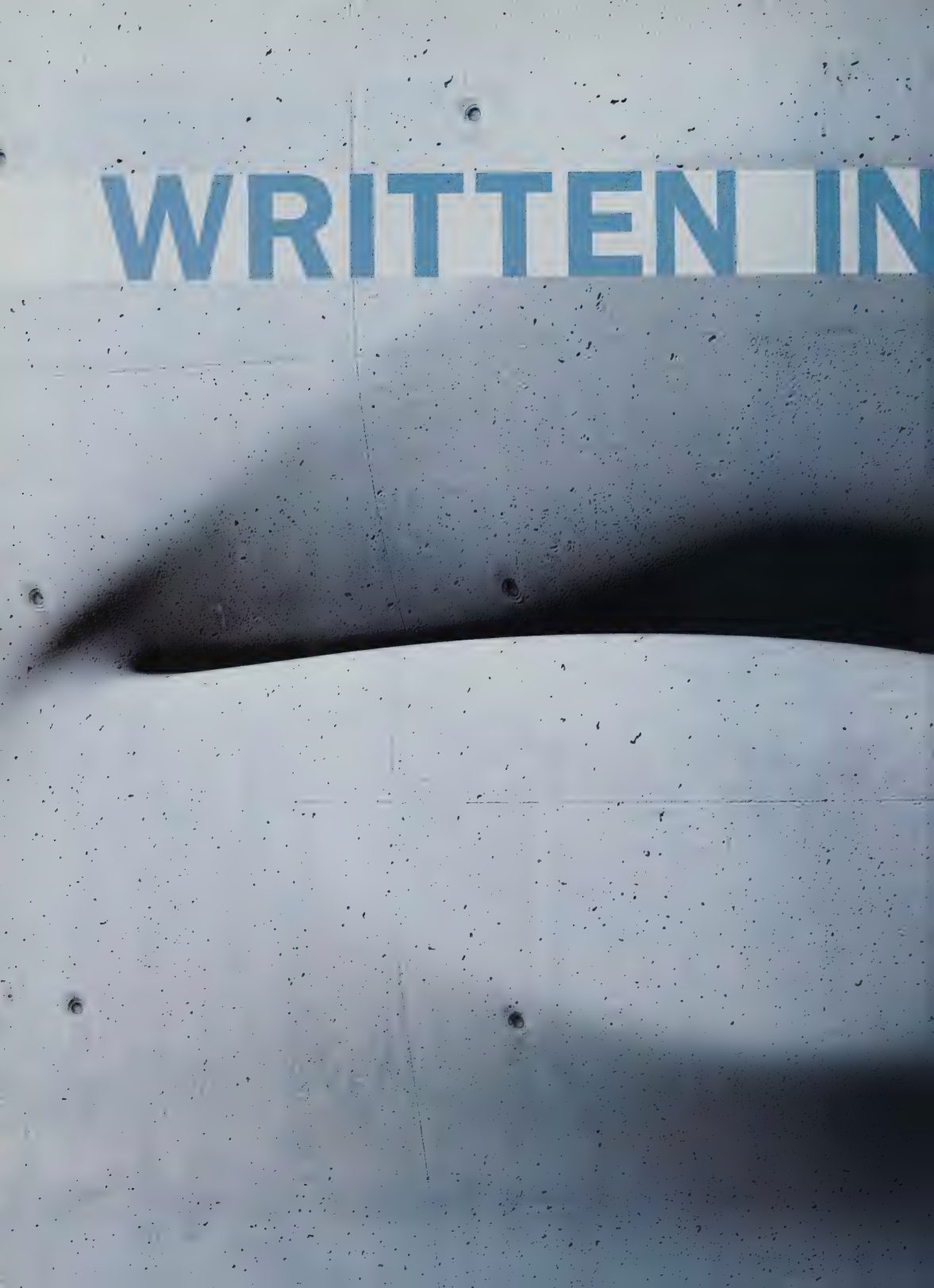
Natural Materials

And finally, a variety of natural materials are being reintroduced into contemporary industrial applications of all kinds. Natural fibers from plant material are particularly interesting as the reinforcing fiber for a number of "biocomposites." Automobile companies have been quick to apply natural-fiber reinforced polymers as the material of choice for interior wall panels and other components. Environ Biocomposites is one company that produces composite boards for architectural interiors, made from agricultural waste materials.

This list represents only a thin slice through the possibilities in the near and far future. With the eventual introduction of these "emerging" materials, the architectural artifact will undoubtedly change. Just as the exterior building enclosure has already become more layered, partly due to the availability of new sheet materials, the architectural artifact — its form, mass, texture — will be transformed in ways that are not always easy to predict. Delivering on the promise of new materials will require intimate knowledge of the technical challenges as well as the formal opportunities. As stewards of the most integrative art, architects cannot neglect this challenge. ■

John E. Fernandez AIA is an assistant professor at MIT. His book *Materializing Architecture*, about the new materials of contemporary buildings, will be published by Architectural Press of Oxford later this year.




WRITTEN IN



BY HUBERT MURRAY AIA

CONCRETE

If the medium is the message, what does concrete tell us?

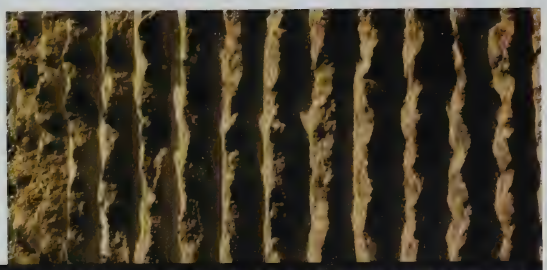
Concrete, that cold, hard, formless mass, unloved and ubiquitous, is on the rebound. As difficult as it may be for the world at large to imagine, concrete is to architects the most romantic of materials, the embodiment and realization of social and aesthetic ideals.

Used in the building of the Pantheon, there is perhaps no material so resonant of the Modern Movement as concrete. For America, concrete in the 20th century was the material of capital expansion, much as it is in China today. Grain silos on the Great Lakes, Ford's River Rouge plant in Detroit, and the Hoover Dam were each emblematic of American industrial power and the modern world, all built in concrete, each a shrine to American achievement.

For the French and the Europeans, however, concrete was as much romantic inspiration as it was pragmatic imperative. The engineers Maillart and Freyssinet, in pushing the technical limits of *béton armé* — reinforced concrete — were at the same time engaged in an aesthetic of plastic minimalism, creating forms of slender simplicity that would have honored the portfolio of the sculptor Brancusi, their contemporary.

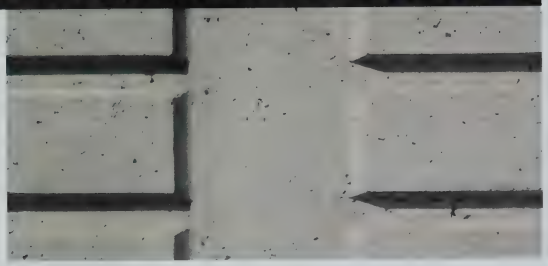
It was the German architect Erich Mendelsohn who, with his photographs of the Buffalo grain silos, brought back to Europe the romance of Modernism cast in concrete. His breathless enthusiasm for "the stupendous verticals of fifty to a hundred cylinders" was conveyed in the stark monochrome of his images, which illustrated the chapter on mass in Le Corbusier's *Towards a New Architecture*.

In this blockbuster manifesto synthesizing architecture, politics, and morality, Le Corbusier proposed that the virtues



Above: Lindemann Center (Paul Rudolph, 1970). Coarse-aggregate concrete was poured into corrugated formliners and bush-hammered.

Below: Viaduct piers, new Central Artery (Wallace Floyd Associates with Stull and Lee, 1992). Rustication detail creates a sense of scale.



Concrete continues to express idealism in building. Because it is so ubiquitous and because it is the product of artifice, being formless without formwork, it remains open to and dependent upon suggestion, intervention, and expression.

of honesty, functionalism, and material progress inherent in the concrete forms of industrial structures could be transferred to the architecture of housing, schools, and offices. Concrete could become the medium through which mass, surface, and plan would be transformed into utopian communalism.

In Le Corbusier's "white" buildings, however, materiality was suppressed in favor of pure form. The "concreteness" of the Villa Savoie (1928-30) is disguised behind the geometric abstraction of white stucco. The Gropius house (1938) in Lincoln, Massachusetts, is conceived in similarly platonic fashion. Internationalism, a facet of Modernism, thus derived its "style" from the universal truths of pure geometry, unencumbered by contingencies of place or climate.

The weather, regrettably, is unforgiving, and rain, pollution, frost, and sunshine take their toll on a pure white building in the form of streaking, spalling, rusting, and peeling. In the face of this reality, purity of expression in architectural concrete had to be redefined, if not reversed. The materiality of the concrete itself would express the essence of the building, complementing, not detracting from, its potential for expressing mass and proportion. *Béton brut* — raw concrete — was at once description and label of the material itself and its expression of mass and volume, the defining characteristics of what came to be called "the New Brutalism."

In postwar France, Le Corbusier realized his first major building in this vein, the Unité d'Habitation in Marseille (1947-52), in which he extols the contingencies of French construction as essential elements in the design: "The defects shout at one from all parts of the structure.... Exposed concrete shows the least incidents of the shuttering, the joints of the planks, the fibres, and knots of the wood." Ten years later, Le Corbusier completed the monastery of La Tourette in the countryside outside Lyon, a sophisticated essay in *béton brut* that not only capped his own career, but also served as a model for the generation that followed.

In collaboration with Josep Lluis Sert, Le Corbusier built the Carpenter Center — a "machine for learning" — at Harvard (1961-63) in what was to be his only building in the United States. The stunning juxtaposition of *béton brut* set within the ivied brick and limestone of Quincy Street was as shocking to the public as it was exciting to the profession. President Kennedy had been elected to office in 1960, creating a sense of democratic opportunity and excitement not only in politics but also in technology and the arts. Le Corbusier at Harvard was part of the vibe.

As it had been in the Europe of the '20s and '30s, concrete became the cultural expression of progressive politics and social optimism in the United States of the '60s. Following the completion of the Carpenter Center in 1963, almost all of Boston's concrete buildings were built in the 10 years that followed. From the March on Washington in 1963 to the Supreme Court decision on Roe v. Wade in 1973, that decade was one of progress and promise. Boston itself was in the process of emerging from decades of corrupt parochialism to become a beacon of architecture and urbanism, reflective of a reformed and progressive city government. The Beatles, Bob Dylan, and Woodstock were in the vanguard of turning the world upside down. If, as Goethe suggested, architecture is "frozen music," then concrete was also the music of that decade.

The significant buildings of this period fall into three phases. First there was the work by then aging Modern Movement protagonists from the old world: the Carpenter Center; Peabody Terrace; the JFK Federal Building. In the middle phase came two new buildings designed by young radicals from the new world, following in their masters' footsteps: the State Street Bank and the Boston Architectural Center. The third phase started with the completion of Boston City Hall and continued with the New England Aquarium and the Lindemann Center. The Boston Five Cents Savings Bank and Christian Science Center rounded out the decade, the former a superb example of Brutalism in context, the latter an elegant though somewhat pallid version of the Brutalist manifesto.

While City Hall is perhaps the purest expression of the New Brutalism, reminiscent as it is of the disciplined proportionality of La Tourette, perhaps the most extreme version is Rudolph's Lindemann Center (the Health, Education and Welfare Building). Curvaceous and corrugated, the bush-hammered corduroy finish is as relentless inside the building as it is outside, taking to the limit the notion of texture and contingency as an expression of concrete materiality. As a home for the mentally ill, which it is, one would be hard pressed to imagine a more insensitive building, not to say brutal.

By the early 1970s, a failure of nerve set in. The disasters of that era (the Vietnam War; Watergate; the environmental catastrophes of Love Canal and Three Mile Island; Boston's busing crisis) took their toll. In architecture there was a retreat from the Modernist program of social reform through building. The miserable expression of privatization was Po-Mo, a movement without ideals and with no commitment to authenticity in construction or material, the effects of which continue to this day.

Concrete, however, continues to express idealism in building. Because it is so ubiquitous and because it is the product of artifice, being formless without formwork, it remains open to and dependent upon suggestion, intervention, and expression. In contrast to its former vogue, the emphasis now is more upon the finer rather than the coarser qualities of the material. Tadao Ando and Peter Zumthor each favor cast-in-place concrete, focusing on formwork to achieve cabinet-like quality in the finish. Steven Holl's Simmons Hall at MIT is a recent and rare example in the United States of an all-concrete building. Externally, the pre-cast concrete loadbearing wall panels are clad in aluminum acting as an epidermis to the insulation behind. Internally, the finely finished pre-cast surfaces are juxtaposed with the textured cast-in-place concrete of stairways and the "sponge space" voids that permeate the building, creating a dialectic between machined finesse and natural form.

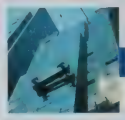
Manufacturers are producing high-performance concrete that is not only environmentally more efficient (consuming less energy and giving off less CO_2) but qualitatively transformed. "Ductal" is an ultra-high-density concrete without steel reinforcement and of almost ceramic-like finish that is impermeable to moisture and the ravages of frost. Manufactured by Lafarge to seal aging nuclear reactors, it can now be seen in ultra-thin bridges and as a diaphanous screen for a museum in Marseille. Another innovation, "LitraCon" is a translucent concrete permeated with a matrix of fiber-optic cables that allow light and shadow to penetrate mass and plane.

For all the talk about honesty in the Modern Movement, the social and political messages loaded upon the concrete messenger were at their worst damaging and at best, hyperbole. Refreshingly, concrete no longer represents a brave new world, achieving instead its integrity through research and craftsmanship — much like any other material. ■

Hubert Murray AIA has an architectural and planning practice in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Boston: The Concrete Decades

1963	**Carpenter Center (Harvard)** Le Corbusier (with Sert, Jackson, and Gourley)
1964	**Peabody Terrace (Harvard)** Josep Lluis Sert
	Green Building (Earth Sciences, MIT) I.M. Pei and Associates
	JFK Building Walter Gropius (TAC)
	State Street Bank Stahl Associates with Hugh Stubbins
	Eastgate Married Students' Housing (MIT) Eduardo Catalano
1966-68	**The Children's Hospital** The Architects Collaborative
1967	**Boston Architectural Center** Ashley, Myer and Associates
1968	**70 Federal Street** Stahl Associates
1968-73	**Christian Science Center** I.M. Pei and Associates; Cossuta and Ponte; Sasaki, Dawson, DeMay
1969	**Boston City Hall** Kallmann, McKinnell and Knowles
1969	**New England Aquarium** Cambridge Seven Associates
1969	**King School (Cambridge)** Sert, Jackson and Associates
1969	**Design Research (Cambridge)** Benjamin Thompson Associates
1970	**Government Center Garage** Kallmann, McKinnell and Knowles
	Health, Education, Welfare Center (Lindemann) Paul Rudolph
1971	**Harbor Towers** I.M. Pei
1972	**Boston Five Cents Savings Bank** Kallmann, McKinnell and Knowles
	Gund Hall (Harvard) John Andrews
	Martin Luther King Jr. School (Cambridge) Sert, Jackson and Associates
	1st and 2nd Church in Boston Paul Rudolph
1975	**Cambridge Rindge and Latin School** Eduardo Catalano



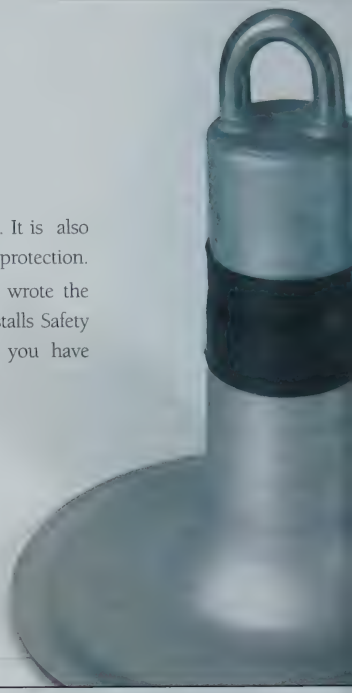
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Gillette Stadium in Foxboro, MA
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Teaching

What students need to know about the material world

BY KIMO GRIGGS AIA

I need to work with tools and physical materials to stay sane, and I am fortunate to have a practice that regularly includes these activities. I have also been a teacher of materials, artisanry, and the tools of digital manufacturing, prototyping, and design for the last 15 years. My dual lives have required that I develop a consistent approach to materials and building technologies that my employees and associates can understand so that we can work together effectively and that my students can consider as a model for their own work.

Like other aspects of practice, the subject of materials and the methods we use to employ them in our projects is interesting to some, but not to all. Many designers never learn the differences between different metals, for example, with no deleterious effects. Others are controlled by their specific knowledge, finding they can't design without knowing what metal and alloy a part will be made of and — once they know — finding themselves limited to shapes that are available in that material. Knowledge of materials, it turns out, tends to be just as personal and idiosyncratic as knowledge of design strategy, history, and theory, despite the fact that we all seem to have read Ed Allen's books on construction methodologies while in school.

Architecture schools have probably always attracted some students who were mad to get their hands dirty using real tools and real materials, even during those periods when an emphasis was placed on professionalizing our field. Asking a brick "what it wants to be" doesn't provide everyone with useful answers, and even produced some quiet mavericks, admired by classmates but officially left to their own devices in school workshops that languished under shrinking budgets and faculty inattention. Today, they are model students, celebrated by both teachers and peers, and winning prizes. Materials, new materials, materiality, immateriality, digital production, CAD/CAM, product design, craft, rapid prototyping, and mass customization are some of the subjects that are of interest to students today. They all deal with the world of materials that students want to be involved in at some level, particularly "new materials." Where a few teachers once led the way, schools are now responding to student demand by buying new tools, building larger workshops, and re-jiggering course offerings. The promise is "real" knowledge — with immediate utility in the studio and longer-term use in practice — and the "cool" quotient is large. The materials buzz has been building for well over a decade, supported by new businesses, the magazines, shows at galleries as glamorous as the Museum of Modern Art, and studio critics at the best schools.

How do you teach "Materials" without explaining how the whole world works? It is, after all, an enormously complex subject, but it needs to be presented so that immediately useful information is intermixed with the broad knowledge required for long-term utility. Students come to school to learn design, so little time is available for other coursework, and attention spans are short. Materials courses may or may not be supported

Materials



Light fixture: The Miracle of Science Bar & Grill, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Aluminum extrusions, copper sheet, incandescent tubular light source. Design and fabrication: Kimo, Inc.

by the design-studio royalty — the elite among the faculty who influence a school's culture and politics. Even though there is strong interest and obvious relevance, the enterprise is fraught with difficulty.

There was a time when the study of materials and methods was almost universally force-fed, along with structures, heating and ventilation, and other practical necessities of practice. Using a lecture format, with the odd hands-on exercise to reinforce the practicalities of forming concrete or the surprising strength of a box beam, for example, generations of students slipped into the gentle sleep associated with slide shows that have little sizzle but plenty of steak. This method simply didn't hold up when students began to show an active interest in the area first by staying awake, and then by demanding more sizzle, so new approaches were, and continue to be, developed. Despite tradition, there was no strong resistance when adventuresome teachers introduced new teaching techniques.

One new method of teaching materials and methods combines lectures and hands-on workshop demonstrations first to explain how tools work and then to show how tools lead directly to construction methods and basic building types found worldwide, such as the relationship between chisels and the simple wood connections that make post-and-beam frames possible. Understanding how new developments in tools or methods can lead directly to new building components or types at any time leads to a new appreciation of the relationship between construction technology and architectural landmarks: the simple and awesome strength of the riveted steel connections that made the Eiffel Tower possible; the capacity to cast large iron components that led to the Crystal Palace; the *in-situ* concrete casting used on Saarinen's TWA terminal. Demonstrations of carving, mechanical fastening, and casting techniques introduce three ways of making: material removal; fabrication; and forming or casting. Workshop exercises reinforce the distinctions. This approach makes it possible to place virtually any new material or shape into a matrix of known methods and types. It works exceptionally well as a teaching method that can be further strengthened by coordination with other coursework, and the design studio in particular.

Another method introduces students directly to specific materials, often within a design context, by asking them to find inspiration in the qualities of the materials themselves. Stone, wood, bamboo, wool, steel, gypsum board, plywood, and laminates, among many other materials, are bent, broken, twisted, crushed, cut, shaved, and reconstituted in an effort to find their essence, to see what new qualities can be identified, and to see what can be seen. Frequently, the work is confused with real materials research. Less frequently, it leads to something useful, but it quite often produces poetic moments of some beauty. As a method for developing a personal approach to choosing appropriate materials and methods, it may leave much to be desired, but it can lead to a hunger for real information that can be very productive.

Another current method assigns studio faculty to teach new materials courses, thus letting students know that the subject is deemed important enough for the most important



Welding: Students acquire visceral knowledge of materials and methods through hands-on experience.

faculty to be teaching it, but apparently not important enough to get qualified experts to teach as they do for structures, history, theory, digital technologies, and other core subjects. Although this method has the advantage of allowing direct coordination between what is taught in studio and what is covered in lectures or in the workshop, it also means the students can't escape the intense scrutiny of their studio instructors. Materials, in this method, inevitably become tied to design discussions early in the learning process, before relationships between making, shape, and form have been clearly established. Although this may be appropriate for willful students, others may wish they had more freedom to explore outside a conscious design agenda.

During our formal education, knowledge of materials — what they are good for and how they can be used — is necessarily incomplete. As in other aspects of architectural education, teaching the basics is imperative before the advanced material can have an impact beyond fashion and mere style. This has become particularly true in the digital age, where students can easily manipulate geometrically complex shapes that defy the realities of construction.

The majority of us leave the academy to build real, physical things. Materials are often both our means and our inspiration, but they must fit within a process that allows us to move from concept to project completion with ease and consistency. A realistic and productive approach that allows us to see new materials and methods in relation to what we already know is critical to this process. Teaching others that the process can also be personal, constantly expanding, and ultimately liberating may be the most valuable material of all. ■

Kimo Griggs AIA is president of Kimo Griggs Architects in Somerville, Massachusetts, and of Kimo, Inc. (a design development and fabrication company specializing in custom building components, furniture, and prototypes). He has taught at Carnegie-Mellon, Columbia, and Harvard, and is currently teaching at the Yale School of Architecture. He is co-author of *Digital Design and Manufacturing* (Wiley 2004).

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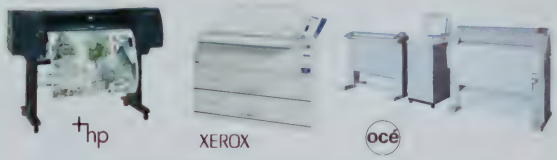
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Thinking outside the box helps build a better box

how things work





Michelle Addington is an associate professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Design. An architect and an engineer, she was originally educated as a nuclear and mechanical engineer. She began her career with NASA and later worked in the chemical industry for many years as a thermal process designer, power plant engineer, and, eventually, a manufacturing manager before she studied architecture. With Dan Schodek, she is co-author of *Smart Materials and Technologies for the Architecture and Design Professions* (Architectural Press/Elsevier, 2004).

Jeff Stein AIA is the architecture critic for *Banker & Tradesman* and the director of the architecture program at the Boston Architectural Center.

Jeff Stein: I often think that every building in downtown Boston is already obsolete; it's hard to believe otherwise when you consider rising energy costs. Do you think that we're not making our buildings work hard enough to solve some of these problems?

Michelle Addington: When we start thinking that buildings should be performing, especially in terms of energy issues, we start trying to force certain behaviors at the scale of architecture. Although we've been pushing energy conservation in buildings for the last 20 years, we have built everything larger and larger, which means we've increased energy use enormously. I'm interested in ways to decouple energy phenomena from the building, to work directly on the phenomena rather than on the building.

Jeff Stein: Your work has been described as re-conceptualizing the human thermal environment, but your focus is actually much wider than buildings.

Michelle Addington: It's about really getting to the roots of how things work. Science has changed radically, particularly in this area — fluid mechanics and heat transfer were the last branches of classical physics to have a theoretical structure that matched empirical phenomena, and that was really only developed in the 1920s. We still tend to think of energy systems in our buildings in terms of 19th-century ideas about dilution and mixing.

Jeff Stein: Tell me about dilution.

Michelle Addington: The concept of dilution comes from the early 19th-century fear of carbonic acid, the belief that every exhalation was poisonous. The idea came from studies by Lavoisier, who took small animals and put them under bell jars. Of course, they expired.

Jeff Stein: But it wasn't their breath at all. It was the fact that they had used up all the oxygen.

Michelle Addington: But he believed it was the exhalation that caused death. So scientists began to look for other components of air, and they rightfully identified carbonic acid, which is actually just carbon dioxide-saturated water. They also believed that body odors were the result of putrefaction of the body. So building ventilation was developed as a way of diluting and moving these poisons from the air. The way it was done 100 years ago is the way we still do it, using all of the air inside the building for dilution.

Jeff Stein: We apply dilution techniques outside buildings, too, to deal with air and water pollutants. It's acceptable to send treated sewage out into Massachusetts Bay rather than Boston Harbor because there's much greater dilution out there.

Michelle Addington: And dilution is a wonderfully effective way of keeping air clean and maintaining thermal conditions. That's one of the reasons the technique stuck around for 100 years. But when buildings become larger and larger, the focus is no longer on the comfort and health of the human body. The focus becomes maintaining a large volume of air in the building at these conditions.

Jeff Stein: Frank Lloyd Wright, who himself was fairly short of stature, was on to this concept and as a result designed buildings that had big square footages, but not big cubic footages. His ceilings were lower.

Michelle Addington: Right. There's a good rule of thumb: every increase in dimension increases the use of materials by the square, and increases the demand on the ambient systems by the cube. So when people say, "I increased the R value in my walls, I've done a good thing," the reality is usually that they have indeed designed the walls to exchange less energy, but the substantial increase in our average per capita building volume has quickly eaten up and surpassed those marginal energy savings. We need to think hard about how things really work.

Jeff Stein: When it comes to energy systems, buildings, and materials, you know how things really work. But how do all the rest of us find that out?

Michelle Addington: This is quite a dilemma for the profession. There aren't many people who have a crossover background like mine: I've designed power plants, thermal processes for the chemical industry, and then worked with materials at NASA.

Jeff Stein: I assume one interest led to another, but what sparked your initial curiosity about this field?

Michelle Addington: When I was thirteen, in the late '60s, education was changing radically. In an effort to make it more "relevant," my English literature class was replaced with a class in apocalyptic novels, like *Alas, Babylon* and *On the Beach*. The idea of a nuclear holocaust had captured the public imagination. I was curious about how a nuclear holocaust would actually function, so I looked at information on fallout and was fascinated by the fact that the idea of it spreading broadly across the globe was unlikely — the fallout would actually be contained within a definable boundary.

So if a bomb had been dropped, let's say, on Kansas City, the fallout would have been a north-south line, 50 miles wide, 500 miles long, cigar-shaped, and perpendicular to the prevailing wind. I was fascinated. What kind of phenomenon is responsible for its operating perpendicularly to the prevailing winds?

"Buildings are the largest segment of the energy-consumption pie. And even more disturbing, that is the segment that is increasing at the highest rate."

— Michelle Addington

Jeff Stein: And you became a nuclear engineer to find out.

Michelle Addington: Yes. That was one of the reasons. I started as a math and physics major, but nuclear engineering was even more about design and taking action, which is why I went into it. But by then, my interest in physics had become more focused on thermal behavior. Fallout, it turns out, is a purely thermal phenomenon, because it involves the heating and convection of particles. That's fluid mechanics and heat transfer, not quantum physics. That interest took me from nuclear into mechanical engineering.

But I'm an architect as well, and these two disciplines make for unusual bedfellows — it's not the combination one usually finds when engineering is wedded to architecture. Although my background has clearly influenced my thinking, I don't believe the practicing architect should have to know heat transfer at the micro-level or materials science at the nano-level in order to take action. But I do believe that we've got to start identifying the strategic bits of knowledge that are truly useful.

Jeff Stein: So what would you call a strategic bit of knowledge?

Michelle Addington: Anything you absolutely have to know at its deepest level. Not dumbed down.

When I teach my energy class, I spend a tremendous amount of time in the beginning on the three laws of thermodynamics. We look, not at the rules we've been given, but at the very complex equations behind heat transfer. Instead of learning a kit of things to do if they want to be energy efficient, the students learn the laws — the relationship between pressure and temperature and properties — so they can derive their own strategies. And that means that they have potentially an infinite number of strategies for solving a thermal problem, as opposed to one standard solution that may or may not be applicable to the problem at hand.

Jeff Stein: Perhaps you can give an example of how this approach might lead to different solutions.

Michelle Addington: I try to get students to think about air pressure. No one ever talks about pressure when we talk about design. When people discuss climatic design, they talk about latitude, but rarely about prevailing pressure. Prevailing pressure is the general range of atmospheric pressure that exists in a region, and it completely determines the type of heat transfer. For example, people often talk about using the stack effect — the way heat rises in a chimney — but it only works in certain places.

Jeff Stein: What are some places where it doesn't work?

Michelle Addington: Any high-pressure region — most parts of Canada, most parts of Europe.

Jeff Stein: And what is the condition in Boston?

Michelle Addington: We have a low-pressure summertime and a high-pressure wintertime. It's actually a very interesting condition. For example, we force ourselves to try to use wind ventilation in the summertime, when it's actually not the best strategy for this region in the summer. Yet we have tremendous wind in the winter because it's a high-pressure situation. You can only utilize wind ventilation when you have high-pressure. So students might look at that information and say, "How do I deal with something that's completely different from winter to summer?" They begin to examine their choices and what they can manipulate rather than force-fit a strategy developed for an entirely different situation.

Jeff Stein: This seems to be a complete rethinking of accepted practices that we've all adopted even though they don't actually work particularly well. Is this approach included in your new book?

Michelle Addington: The general approach is included, although I am also working on another book about climate design. The book is an attempt to lay the groundwork for communication with other disciplines. For example, we've included some very specific information from materials science and from physics.

Jeff Stein: The book is called *Smart Materials and Technologies for the Architecture and Design Professions.* What exactly is a "smart" material?

Michelle Addington: A smart material is by definition a thermodynamic material, a material that changes its properties or exchanges some kind of energy. Thermodynamics affects the actual molecular or micro structure of the material.

Jeff Stein: Does this include standard materials that we know: stone, clay, steel, concrete, glass, wood?

Michelle Addington: Yes and no. Because they are such a compelling idea, smart materials are a useful way to introduce lots of ideas about materials science. But generally speaking, they are materials that change phases and seamlessly respond to changes in surrounding conditions. For example, a lot of people have been excited in the last few years by a new high-performance material called Aerogel, which has very low conductivity. Low conductivity is fine sometimes, but sometimes it's not. When you optimize a material for one condition, you are often responding too specifically to conditions that are actually extraordinarily variable. Everyone's dream material is one whose conductivity changes with temperature — that would be a smart material.

Jeff Stein: Has that dream come true yet?

Michelle Addington: Almost. The interesting aspect of smart materials is that many of them are bidirectional, which means they are one thing under one set of conditions and the exact opposite under another set of conditions. For example, a phase-change window is opaque under one condition and transparent under another. Many of these materials are either/or — they're one thing or the other thing, as opposed to something that's seamlessly shifting. What's important to understand is that each one of those changes takes place at the molecular level; thermal phenomena happen at a very small scale.

Jeff Stein: Architecture has generally evolved as a response of form to site, different in the northern hemisphere from the southern. But a material like phase-change glass doesn't require a change in the form of a building and doesn't require any particular architectural context at all.

Michelle Addington: Once one starts decoupling thermal phenomena from the building, the building becomes an armature for different kinds of things. We're no longer trying to design the über-wall that does everything. Instead, we can be very particular and very specific about what we want the wall to do and when. As an architect, I want freedom. I don't want to be restricted to using these materials in a prescribed way according to a series of rules that don't have any meaning any more. Our previous understanding of thermal rules determined certain things about form, which in turn determined certain things about materials. I wanted to get away from that kind of determination and see how it frees up the designer.

Jeff Stein: We're in the midst of a period in which not too many architects feel that way.

Michelle Addington: I think you're right. I think many students are drawn to green design because it is the most deterministic system available right now.

Jeff Stein: History offers a pretty deterministic system, too, especially in a region like this where there's a lot of it. But let's follow up on the interest in green design and sustainability. Ed Mazria, the well-known architect who is an advocate of passive solar design, suggests that buildings are responsible for 48 percent of all energy use in America. Architecture uses half the energy that we use in this country.

Michelle Addington: That's a higher number than I've heard, but not by much. Buildings are indeed the largest segment of the energy-consumption pie. And even more disturbing, that is the segment that is increasing at the highest rate. Transportation, in spite of our whole SUV infatuation, has not increased at the same rate as buildings. Industry has been the best by far — industry has really held consumption down, because it has a stake in it. Saving money in energy costs translates directly into profit. One thing people don't realize is that the move toward information technology has dramatically increased interior heat loads. Half the cooling we have in a building is to remove heat generated by equipment.

Jeff Stein: I wonder how smart materials might start to influence that level of consumption. And I admit that I wonder how their use might affect our perception of our buildings. Old materials — stone, metal, wood — have stories to tell about

"Because smart materials are very powerful but very small, the ideal use of them would be in ways in which they are not visible to us. They don't replace the window; they don't replace the wall. What they do is *activate* these components and systems."

— Michelle Addington

where they came from and who worked on them and the tools that were used on them. Will we miss that with smart materials?

Michelle Addington: I am hoping that those qualities will become ever more apparent. Because smart materials are very powerful but very small, the ideal use of them would be in ways in which they're not visible to us. They don't replace the window; they don't replace the wall. What they do is *activate* these components and systems.

Jeff Stein: In what way? How are they applied? In a film? Are they sprayed on?

Michelle Addington: It could be all of those things, but again, remember, that nothing has to operate at that large a scale. When you suggest that they would be sprayed on, you're still thinking in terms of a building scale. So how do you take these small actions? You could have a tiny little heat sink that would completely control heat transfer through the wall almost invisibly, with a few resistance wires.

Jeff Stein: What would you use as the tiny heat sink?

Michelle Addington: A heat pump. This is the other thing that is so interesting about this work. When I started this work, MEMS technology was off in the future. MEMS stands for "micro-electro-mechanical systems," and it allows you to put micro electronics and sensors on a chip. When I started, there was a big plan to use MEMS to power batteries for soldiers, but that was about it. Now, every laptop is cooled, not with a fan, which is the old-fashioned way, but with an extraordinarily powerful heat pump the size of my thumb, which is possible because of MEMS.

Jeff Stein: How will this approach affect energy consumption? Can it really contain our appetite for energy?

Michelle Addington: I believe we can radically reduce the amount of energy in a building, and I'm not talking 10 percent. For instance, if you lit for perception, you would be using only a 10th of the energy needed for most typical lighting systems. And you wouldn't be aware of the difference.

Jeff Stein: We begin to do that even now, with the notion of task lighting.

Michelle Addington: One of the things we've discovered is that copious daylighting schemes tend to drive up the amount of artificial lighting that's used, because it's very difficult to deal with the high contrast. So there's a lot more artificial lighting used in many spaces that use too much daylighting.

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Electric lighting is by far the most inefficient process that's used in buildings today. People talk about replacing incandescent with fluorescent. But there are two aspects of that switch-over that most people don't consider. One is that fluorescents are also notoriously inefficient; they're just not as bad as incandescents. Fluorescents might be four times more efficient, but if you think about the amount of electrical energy used to make light from a fluorescent, more than 90 percent of it is wasted. Less than 10 percent of the total electrical energy that is potentially available from a fossil fuel source is actually producing light. The second thing I've noticed is that, in the push to re-lamp spaces to convert to fluorescent, everybody's upped the lighting standards.

Jeff Stein: They're providing more foot-candles?

Michelle Addington: More foot-candles and many more lamps. So the total energy use has gone up, even though people say, We saved 10 percent because we replaced all these lamps. Well, they didn't, because they also installed more.

The problem is in the way we approach this kind of issue. Instead of asking how much total greenhouse gas we're responsible for, we ask if we're better or worse than the norm. That's how we do things. All of our standards are based on behaviors relative to something that's been assigned as the norm. But we should be starting from zero and be held accountable for all the greenhouse gases from building contributions, not just a small fraction of them.

Jeff Stein: The production of greenhouse gases isn't necessarily the same as the use of BTUs, is it?

Michelle Addington: No, but you need to consider what you get from a BTU, and then how those BTUs are produced. It's easy to determine, but every location is going to be different. For example, the source in Quebec is primarily hydropower. They still use tremendous quantities of BTUs and tremendous numbers of watts, but in terms of greenhouse gases, there's little impact.

Jeff Stein: But they traded off other environmental impacts for that result.

Michelle Addington: Yes; that's one of the issues you always have with many of the renewable sources: they almost always come with a large and immediate environmental impact. You're trading one impact for another.

Every single thing we do is destructive. Every single thing we do consumes energy. Consider zero to be our norm and start looking at what we can do from there. Although the production of energy is not the designer's job, how it's used is entirely our responsibility. ▪





Covering the Issues

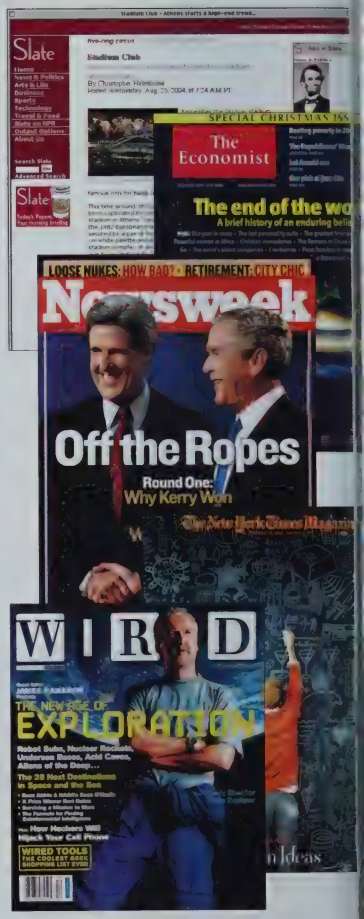
Celebrity stadiums... As he reflects on the Athens Olympics, ***Slate***'s Christopher Hawthorne notes that Calatrava's stadium design received as much screen time as the Acropolis, and predicts a trend in high-end stadium architecture ("Stadium Club," posted Wednesday, August 25, 2004). The reason? The stadium's dramatic new roof, which is visually stunning when TV cameras look down from above. The experience of tens of thousands of spectators inside is nothing compared to the global television audience. Hawthorne reports that similarly bold projects are to come in New York, London, and Beijing. Like the Sydney Opera House or the St. Louis Arch, these telegenic stadiums are apparently the new urban icons. For now, Boston might need to be satisfied with the Fenway grounds crew's increasingly complex mowing patterns.

Reading history... In "A Shift in the Landscape," ***The Economist*** (December 18, 2004) takes the reader through Germany's "broad landscape of commemoration," a series of museums and monuments of the past decade dedicated to the Holocaust. While many projects honor the victims, a few newer projects also struggle to acknowledge that ordinary people committed many of these crimes. In doing so, German cultural institutions have started to subtly shift their focus from the victims to the perpetrators, trying to try to better understand how ordinary Germans supported and participated in the Nazi regime. In describing this, *The Economist* examines how design conveys these difficult messages.

Home is where the amenities are... The latest force in revitalizing downtowns is ... senior citizens! If you're bored with yet another round of (much-deserved) accolades for the newly renovated Museum of Modern Art, bypass that ***Newsweek*** feature and turn instead to Peg Tyre's piece on "Seniors and the City" (October 11, 2004). She notes that Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Dallas have recently experienced double-digit growth in residents over age 65. (Boston has seen 4 percent growth.) Attracted by cultural amenities, car-free lifestyles, ease of wheelchair mobility, and less social isolation, affluent retirees are finding that downtown housing costs are well worth the extra expense. In the immortal words of one developer, "Who ever thought that suburban flight would be round trip?"

Here's an idea... Do you live in a microcity? Have you seen through translucent concrete? ***The New York Times Magazine***'s recent "Year in Ideas" issue (December 12, 2004) offers these and more in this encyclopedic listing of the trendsetting concepts of 2004. "Micropolitan areas" is the new federal designation for "locales with a core city of fewer than 50,000" — like Bennington, Vermont; Corning, New York; and Dodge City, Kansas. US land has been previously designated as either metropolitan (with a dense downtown) or rural, even though much of the nation does not live in either place. Other architecturally inspired entries include the new museum strategy of "nonhegemonic curating," and the Wandering Museum, created from cargo containers and cardboard tubes and due to take up its first residence on a Hudson River pier this spring.

It's not sci-fi anymore... Movie-maker James Cameron guest edits ***Wired*** magazine's feature section on "The New Age of Exploration" (December 2004), demonstrating his fascination with expeditions. (His film crew was first to get interior footage of the sunken *Titanic*.) This series of articles describes space stations, biospheres, and submersibles, and is largely written by the people who go there. Those of us who aren't as daring might prefer to explore the ways that the technological innovations that support human life in such extreme environments might translate to making terrestrial life more habitable, too. ■



Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA, teaches the architecture studios at Smith College and maintains a practice in Boston.

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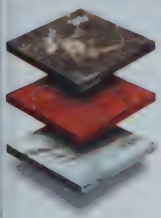


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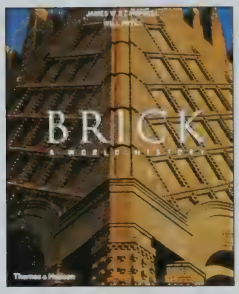
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BRICK: A WORLD HISTORY
by James M.P. Campbell with photographs by Will Pryce
Thames & Hudson, 2003
Reviewed by Phyllis Andersen

That the phrase "bricks and mortar" has come to mean an investment in physical structures attests to a world-view of the brick as immutable design currency. James Campbell, a fellow in architecture and history of art at Queens College, Cambridge, and Will Pryce, a documentary photographer trained in architecture, have produced a lush coffee-table book that is both a scholarly treatise and an accessible road map of the historical use of the world's most ubiquitous building material.

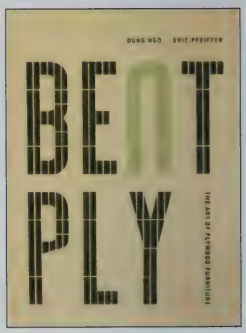
Campbell gives this potentially overwhelming subject a chronological framework that generates interesting juxtapositions. The section on the classical world includes a detailed examination of Roman brick construction from Trajan's Markets to the Aqua Claudia and then proceeds to the great brick dome of Hagia Sophia, early brick construction in China, and the Islamic Tomb of the Saminids in Bukhara. Medieval brickwork brings in the great churches, castles, and fortifications of Europe, and as well the forgotten temples of Pagan, an ancient city of Burma, and Chinese pagodas in Suzhou and Hangzhou. Exemplifying the early modern world, the authors feature Brunelleschi's dome in Florence, the renewed use of architectural terracotta in Italy and Great Britain, and the brick façade of St. Basil's in Moscow.

The narrative continues with early 19th-century shift in brickmaking as it was transformed from handicraft to a mechanized industry. Buildings rising out of local clay and sand gave way to those constructed out of imported brick, giving architects a more diverse vocabulary of brick size, color, and texture, and less dependence on local production. The influence of John Ruskin and William Butterfield — with their emphasis on craft — stimulated in America a more rigorous vocabulary of brick construction, as evidenced by H.H. Richardson's Sever Hall at Harvard, the bricks laid in English Garden Wall bond. Campbell refutes the view of many architectural historians that Modernism was all about concrete, steel, and glass. He uses Aalto's Baker House at MIT as proof that some of the greatest Modernists produced their most sensitive buildings in brick.

Those members of Boston's design community who regard modern brick construction as backward-looking would do well to look at the authors' examples of brick in contemporary settings, especially Mario Botta's Evry Cathedral and the work of the Danish architect Eric Christian Sorensen.

As the story unfolds in this fascinating and informative text, artisan skills combine with the role of master builder as entrepreneur. During the Renaissance, power shifted to the architect, who assumed control of design, material, and construction technology. Campbell questions whether the constraints of contemporary building practice — bids, contracts, insurance — and scarcity of skilled craftspeople will diminish the historic collaboration that took place between architect and bricklayer to produce new and innovative ways to take advantage of the power of the brick to express both form and design.

Phyllis Andersen is the former director of the Institute for Cultural Landscape Studies of the Arnold Arboretum and is a member of the *ArchitectureBoston* editorial board.



BENT PLY: THE ART OF PLYWOOD FURNITURE
by Dung Ngo and Eric Pfeiffer
Princeton Architectural Press, 2003
Reviewed by Michael Grant AIA

The tremendous popularity and staying power of modern plywood furniture was brought home to me recently when, after the publication of one of our office's residential projects in *Dwell* magazine, we were deluged with phone and e-mail inquiries, not for our architectural services, but asking: "What are those two chairs in the photo of the living room, and where can I get them?" *Bent Ply* includes images of that chair, and some 43 pages of other plywood furniture designs, in the third of its three sections, "A Compendium of Plywood Furniture."

Following a forward by Design Within Reach founder Rob Forbes, the first section of the book is a 60-page history that begins with August Thonet, Aalto, and Breuer and follows the technical advances in adhesives and molding techniques brought on by wartime innovation in the '40s through the advent of the Eameses. The history section is extensively illustrated, as is the entire volume, and clearly documented with detailed endnotes. Highlights include photos of Michael Thonet's fantastically baroque

Boppard chair, shown along with its exquisite patent drawing, and the proto-Womb Chair designed by Charles Eames and Eero Saarinen in 1940, which was subsequently awarded first prize in a competition whose jury included both Breuer and Aalto. The history continues to the present, touching on sustainable practices in plywood design, and the contributions of Nelson, Pesce, Gehry, and others. The inclusion of 1930s advertisements for Breuer's and Aalto's furniture by Bauhaus designers Moholy-Nagy and Herbert Bayer is a bonus.

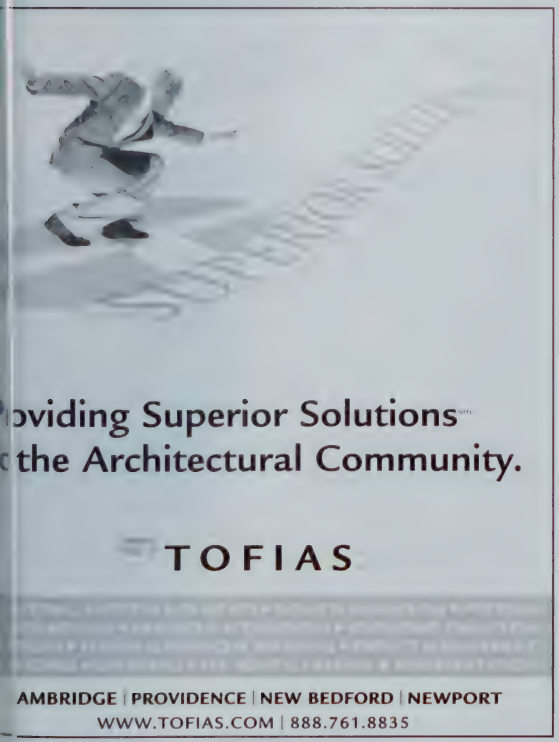
Between the History and the Compendium sections is "The Making of Plywood Furniture," a photo essay documenting the 37 steps in the final production run of author Pfeiffer's "Wave" desk. This informative section follows the process from Latvian birch tree to finished product, with photos showing equipment, materials, and methods at each step.

While the book's focus is on well-known designers, it succeeds at being more than just another look at the usual suspects' work by discussing and illustrating the work of many lesser-known innovators. The graphic design of the book is wonderful, making playful allusions to the style of technical journals and ads from the 1940s and '50s. The choice of plywood for the cover is fun, but maybe questionable given the $45 price. With its three-part structure — part history book, part tech manual, part exhibition catalogue — it is broader than it is deep, but as such it is a great book for students of design, a useful studio companion, and an excellent introduction for anyone interested in furniture design, but not already in possession of an extensive library on the subject. I would also recommend it to readers of *Dwell* magazine: See page 131, and stop with the calls, please.



FAÇADES — BUILDING ENVELOPES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY
by Dirk U. Hinnrichs and Winfried Heusler
Birkhäuser, 2004
Reviewed by Richard Kassel '04A

I have enjoyed having the new book, *Façades — Building Envelopes for the 21st Century*, on my coffee table for the last few weeks. It is an elegant book, with a "fingerprint" embossed on the black





cover. The fingerprint is made up of the names of the architects whose work is presented: Libeskind, Foster, Gehry, Meier, and Jahn, among others. My first impression was one of sophistication — the understated cover, the dazzling photographs, and the unusual projects.

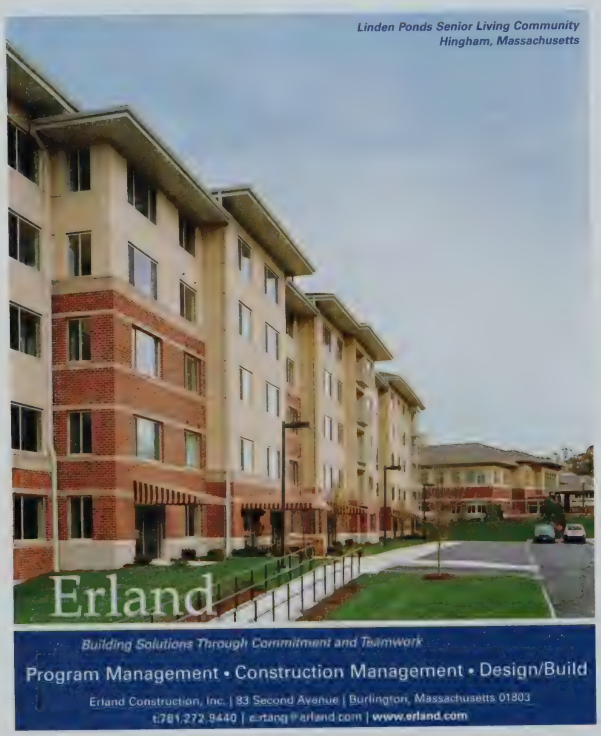
The more I looked at the book, however, the more I realized that it was essentially a monograph on Schüco International KG, a German curtain-wall company. The editors are the president/CEO and the chief technical officer of the company, and the back of the book contains company-specific information. All skepticism aside, that makes the 340 pages of gorgeous color photographs of about 240 outstanding, mostly large-scale, buildings even more impressive, being all by one company.

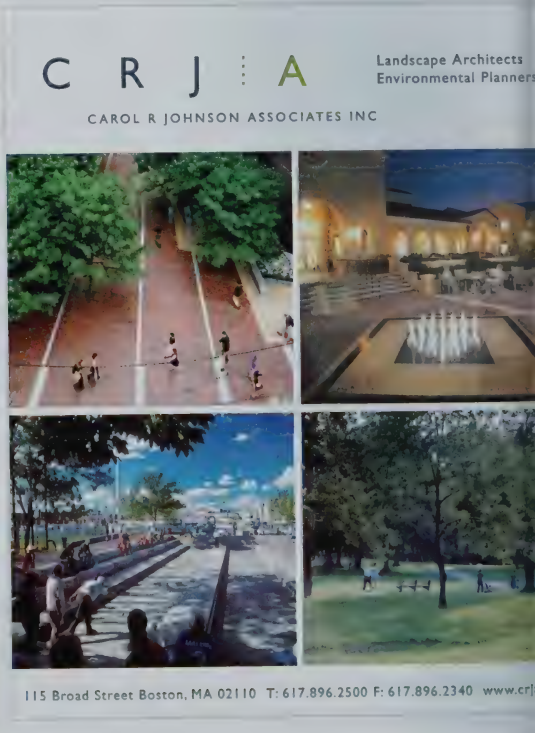
The projects presented display incredible variety and technical virtuosity as well as commitment by all involved in the sophisticated, very transparent, and presumably expensive curtain walls. There are quite a number of elegant double façades of varying designs, ventilated curtain walls, and varieties of sunshading. This book is really an ode to glass and the possibilities of the very transparent metal and glass façade.

Although there are details showing how some of the projects are accomplished, there aren't enough of them on any given project to effectively explain the design, and there are also almost no close-up photographs showing how complicated details are actually accomplished. The building science behind it all isn't explained, although there is a 17-page section at the beginning that hits some of the high points on users' difficulties with high performance buildings, the advantages of custom curtain-wall designs, the need to obtain the owner's design criteria at the beginning of the design phase, and the importance of the integrated design process for high performance design.

Façades — Building Envelopes for the 21st Century suggests that the well-recognized architectural monograph phenomenon has begun to migrate to related disciplines. It is interesting to compare the book to another, similar, book, *Architectural Façades*, by the Permasteelisa Group, which is a bit more straightforward about being a PR piece. There are no details in the second book, but the photographs are equally stunning, the projects equally innovative, and best of all, it is apparently distributed gratis as a catalogue. This is a phenomenon worth watching and doesn't necessarily merit condemnation. Worthy books — offering sound information and stimulating ideas — are produced by self-promoting authors all the time, be they seeking fame, tenure, or election.

Richard Keleher AIA, CSI, LEED AP, is a technical quality and building enclosure consultant in Concord, Massachusetts. He is the founding chair of the BSA's Building Enclosure Council and the past chair of the AIA's Building Science Knowledge Community Advisory Group.







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LED MUSEUM
www.ledmuseum.org
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VINYL BY DESIGN
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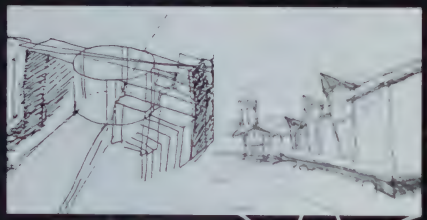
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The Home Depot



Home Depot sells 10 different kinds of concrete.

The chain's orange-vested employees would probably tell you this is a good thing, and it probably is, at least for some people. There are, I am sure, people who understand the difference between "high strength" and "high early strength," or between "mortar mix" and "mason mix." There are, it seems probable, people who like Home Depot.

I am not one of these people. I am terrified by Home Depot.

That's not quite fair. Half of Home Depot, the half full of paint chips and kitchen displays and carpet samples, suits me just fine. It's the other half, the half full of lumber and roof tiles and rows of nearly identical bags of concrete, that has led me, in the company of friends, to refer to the store as "the Home Despot."

This isn't really Home Depot's fault. I may not be able to tell the difference between ready-to-use concrete in a yellow bag and ready-to-use concrete in a yellow-and-black bag, but presumably there are masons out there who would take their business to Lowe's if Home Depot stopped selling one of them. In fact, I'm fairly certain of it, because while I was standing in the concrete aisle trying to figure out the difference, a large man in a tool belt walked up, took one look at the yellow bag, and without a second thought threw it over his shoulder and walked toward the check-out.

I can only dream of being able to show such confidence. Even in the shingle aisle, which at least has laminated labels explaining your options, I am lost. Royal Sovereign, I learn, is the "popular choice for superior performance." Timberline Ultra offers "superior protection and an outstanding wood shake look." If both are superior, which is better?

Of course, I could never ask such a question out loud. That would risk revealing that I have no idea what a "wood shake" is. Instead, I do my best impression of the man in the tool belt, standing, arms folded, legs spread slightly, as if I am considering my options.

This is doomed to fail. Detecting my ruse, a skinny kid in an orange vest quickly approaches.

"Can I help you, sir?" he asks, in a voice that clearly says, "The gardening section is over there."

Really, who can blame him? I'm much more comfortable in that half of Home Depot anyway. It's not that the other half has any fewer options, or even that they're any less obscure — quite the contrary, in fact. Home Depot stocks more kinds of paint than I thought possible. My local Home Depot displays 17 different types of mail-order granite tiles. And the store stocks wood stains that can make plywood look like any of the expensive woods in the lumber section back on the "Despot" side.

But on my side of the store, the multitude of options is presented in a way that welcomes ignorance. Everything has a label, a picture, even a how-to video, and nothing is sold in indistinguishable paper bags. The carpet section has little samples you can look at and feel. There are little mock kitchens with china dishes in the cabinets. And all the different kinds of paint even have little brochures explaining their features.

"Can I help you, sir?" he asks, in a voice that clearly says, "The gardening section is over there."

Granted, I wasn't aware paint needed features, but I can't deny that they sound appealing. There's paint that doesn't fade, paint that can be washed, paint that will do a good job covering up the old paint that you were too lazy to strip. These are features I can understand.

I'm sure concrete has features too, but the concrete at Home Depot doesn't have little brochures, so I don't know what they are. Large men with tool belts don't need brochures, I suppose. But I wouldn't mind one, all the same. ■

Ben Casselman is a staff writer for *The Salem News*.



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City Hall

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Who Do You Think You Are?

"Trees and plants always look like the people they live with, somehow."

Zora Neale Hurston's observation applies to buildings, too — a view far more realistic than Winston Churchill's overly cited "we shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us." Fact is, we continue to shape our buildings, whether through care or neglect. We just can't help it.

So what would a Hurstonian theory of architecture say about Boston City Hall? The question is enough to make any Bostonian cringe; the answers aren't pleasant. City Hall today looks like someone who has lost his self-respect: the hair is unkempt, the nails are chewed, the clothes are torn and in need of a good wash. It looks like someone who was once a young person of promise, who somehow fell under the influence of a bad crowd. It looks like someone who has become dour and defensive, who refuses to contend with his problems.

If City Hall looks like the people it lives with, this is who we are.

City Hall occupies a peculiar position among controversial Modern buildings: the controversy about the building seems to be increasing as time goes by. Even odder, the schism between defenders and detractors can't be neatly defined as Architects versus Everybody Else. As Byron Rushing reminds us in this issue's roundtable, City Hall did not provoke today's vehemence at the time of its opening. Joan Wood AIA and Herb Gleason remember the pride that city workers took in their new offices. The building told the world something about the people it lived with, and the people were flattered.

A focus on City Hall has been lost in the tragicomedy that is the saga of its Plaza. There is something in the soul of a Bostonian that favors self-flagellation, and with the Red Sox win of the World Series, our collective inability to fix the Plaza threatens to become the next long-running curse. The problems of the building and the problems of its site must be addressed together.

The story of the building's beginnings reminds us of the influence of nearly forgotten heroes — the strong direction of Mayor John Collins and banker Bob Morgan, the quiet but effective shepherding by architect James Lawrence FAIA. The project was a case study in leadership.

In recent years, Mayor Menino, with all good intentions, tried earnestly to fix the Plaza. He was smart enough to enlist the help of respected developer Norman Leventhal, but their combined efforts came to naught. It's easy to say this was due to a crisis of political leadership. It's probably more accurate to say that it was due to a crisis of civic leadership, particularly in the business community. Bemoaning the expatriation of Boston's corporate leadership has become a slightly more sophisticated version of nattering about the weather — ritualistic small talk in the salons of Beacon Hill and the "great rooms" of the western 'burbs. It is hard to imagine that nostalgia would settle over the demise of an oligarchic coffee klatch sitting behind closed doors, but the Vault is still recalled fondly as the last best model of civic leadership in this city.

City Hall today looks like someone who has lost his self-respect.

It's time for a new model. The corporate thing isn't working for us anymore. Let's figure out who is invested in this city, who, by virtue of real estate or client base, isn't going anywhere. The first obvious answers are institutions and professionals — architects, lawyers, doctors. A leader does not need to have money. A leader needs to have influence. The money will follow.

The neglect of City Hall should outrage every Bostonian. It should outrage anyone who has a business interest in the city of Boston — regardless of voter registration. Why? Because, like it or not, Boston is the capital city not only of Massachusetts, but also of the New England region. The condition of our public buildings tells the rest of the world something about all of us. ■

Elizabeth S. Padjen FAIA
Editor

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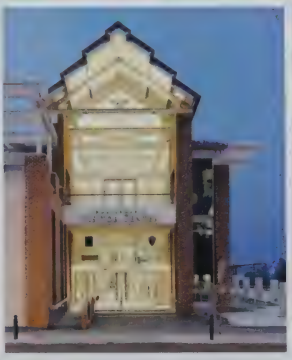












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Your recent issue on materials [March/April 2005] puts the elements back into the central focus of design. The issue recognizes that this is a fantastic period for material development and selection, and that the scope of our material palette is rapidly expanding. However, for many of these novel materials, we have only a limited amount of information. Yes, materials are culturally constructed, but ours is a culture rich in commercial information and disturbingly poor in social knowledge.

The new materials market is largely supplier driven. Designers are left to sort through the claims and promises of enthusiastic vendors. Your roundtable is right in noting that convention, caution, and fear of liability place a chill over a designer's risk-taking. Too often, there is little independent and credible information from laboratories and field experience, and neither our universities nor our professional organizations support the social learning that encourages rapid diffusion of information about the performance of new materials.

Reliable information on the environmental impacts of most materials is also limited. The discussion usefully noted the emergence of green architecture, which is still in its infancy; however, a green design is only one aspect of ecological significance. Every material has a story. Where a material comes from (your Kalin/Oles article) is important, but where it goes as waste or at end-of-life is also critical, as are the energy, resources, and human dignity consumed in moving it along. While designers should not be bound by some kind of "ecological correctness," they should, at a minimum, know and consider how a material selection shapes and alters its natural context throughout its life-cycle.

Materials are also about health and well-being. The discussion neglected to describe how significantly a building's materials determine the safety and healthfulness of indoor air and surfaces and outdoor soils and waterways. As John Ochsendorf notes, materials are never stable or persistent. As weather, solar exposures, ventilation systems, and human activity "pump" a building, its materials off gas, erode, and emit chemicals and particles. Whether it's phthalates from vinyl, fibers from reinforced composites, mercury from coatings, or the fine dusts of flame retardants, the selection of materials dictates the dimensions of human exposures.

The issue impressed with the significant possibilities of new materials, but also overwhelmed. How is a designer to know? Where does an architect get reliable information? Ben Casselman's little coda cartoons the dilemma. In the years ahead, we must seek to develop as much knowledge and thoughtfulness about the materials that we select and use as we do in developing and marketing them.

Ken Geiser, Director
Lowell Center for
Sustainable Production
University of Massachusetts Lowell

Materials are changing as well as our ideas about them. While the technical dimension is fascinating, what interests me are the implications, the possibilities to reshape our culture of consumption and waste. Thinking differently about matter is a fundamental human endeavor, from alchemy to particle physics. Our current challenge is to learn, not how to exploit matter, but how to revere its essence and cultivate its potential. Thank you for an exceptional and provocative issue.

Vernon Woodworth AIA
Boston

Jeff Stein's interview with Michelle Addington suggests a metaphor for the BSA's posture between the larger community and its academic resources.

My own current interest is [Boston's] Back Bay. One of the assets of this (relative) highland is summer's cooling breezes flowing from the harbor to the Charles River basin. [During the 1970s], the first of Boston's condominiums had begun to mushroom along the streets and alleys of the Back Bay. This format allowed several of the larger, more architecturally significant structures to be re-programmed without loss of integrity. But over time, the impact has been to continue the dissection of its row houses into what today should still be called "flats."

Nineteenth-century developers and their architects must have known about this regional air pattern; they saw that it was possible to ventilate each floor through the generous spacing of streets and alleys. Not so the latter-day flats: they were relentlessly cut up into front and back. This led to the need for window air-conditioning units. It is difficult to say which impact was worse: energy consumption — or the grim pustules on otherwise deathless facades.

Having spent nearly 50 years enjoying this floor-through blessing, I can imagine what the Back Bay would be like had current energy concerns been with us in 1950. Preservation of this economically indispensable flow of air might be a code requirement today.

This preamble is directed at harnessing the new and compelling paradigm shift identified by Michelle Addington. Where is the academic establishment on applying its skills to solving this kind of energy (and people) equation? Can the BSA act as midwife to a more wholesome future?

Joseph Eldredge FAIA
West Tisbury, Massachusetts

I'm a design/build woodworker living in Boston and was recently introduced to your magazine. I'm finding it to be quite an enjoyable and informative read, even

as someone who is more on the fringes of the field.

The layout is appealing and I particularly liked the Materials issue, finding food for thought on matters which pertain to my own work. Looking forward to more.

Martha Plusquellec
Roslindale, Massachusetts

Victoria Beach ["Too Far from the Tree," November/December 2004] advances a curious argument that requires the simultaneous acceptance of two contradictory positions: first, that "knowledge is the only real tool of any professional"; and second, that the strength of generalists is "not knowing." She does, however, make a valid point in stating that many clients want predictable results. They want to know they are putting their limited financial resources in the hands of someone who understands the nature of their enterprise. They want to know their staff resources will not be compromised by inept planning borne of inexperience with their type of facility. They want to have confidence that the people in charge of coordinating all of the technical disciplines fully appreciate the technological challenges that must be addressed. They, understandably, want to place their future in the hands of people who can demonstrate that they know what they are doing. It is hard to imagine a client who would be swayed by an architect who thinks his/her strength is his/her lack of knowledge.

Ms. Beach's argument depends on the assumption that specialization is reductive, not additive. Her position implies that a specialist is somehow required to flush from his/her brain all general knowledge of architecture. She also seems to be under the impression that firms specializing in healthcare are devoid of architects who may have complementary specialties.

There is a legitimate need for generalists within our profession, but there is also a demand for practitioners with specialized knowledge and capabilities. Neither is the only legitimate methodology for responsive, successful practice. How we best strengthen the beneficial impact of all practitioners is the challenge we must address. We cannot, however, do our job and lead our profession if we resort to oversimplifying the realities of the practice environment.

David Watkins FAIA
Houston

Nantucket Sound is a national treasure that, with proper planning and zoning of our coastlines, would long ago have been designated as a US National Park, comparable to the Grand Canyon. The questions and challenges related to the complex issues which are involved in the specific siting, size, and technology of a "wind turbine plant" in Nantucket Sound are not anti-alternative energy. They are intensely pro-alternative energy. What we do first in this arena must work, or alternative energy sources will be set back by years.

There are some serious concerns that we must address. They should not be responded to by the "knee-jerk environmentalism" of which the letter by David Hacin [September/October 2004] (who also happens to be the wind turbine developer's architect) is so typical. His letter implies that this particular project will save the world from everything from oil dependency to terrorism. It won't.

Finally, architects, of all people, should not be fooled by "a pretty picture." When illustrating this project, *ArchitectureBoston* should use the actual plan of the proposed 40-story high installation on the chart of Nantucket Sound at a readable scale, not a photo of an isolated turbine in a different installation overseas.

Sherrie S. Cutler AIA
Boston

We want to hear from you. Letters may be e-mailed to epadjen@architects.org or sent to *ArchitectureBoston*, 52 Broad Street, Boston, MA 02109.

Letters may be edited for clarity and length, and must include your name, address, and daytime telephone number. Length should not exceed 300 words.

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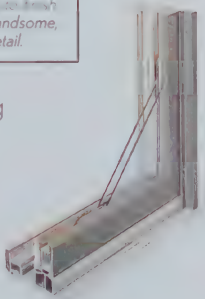
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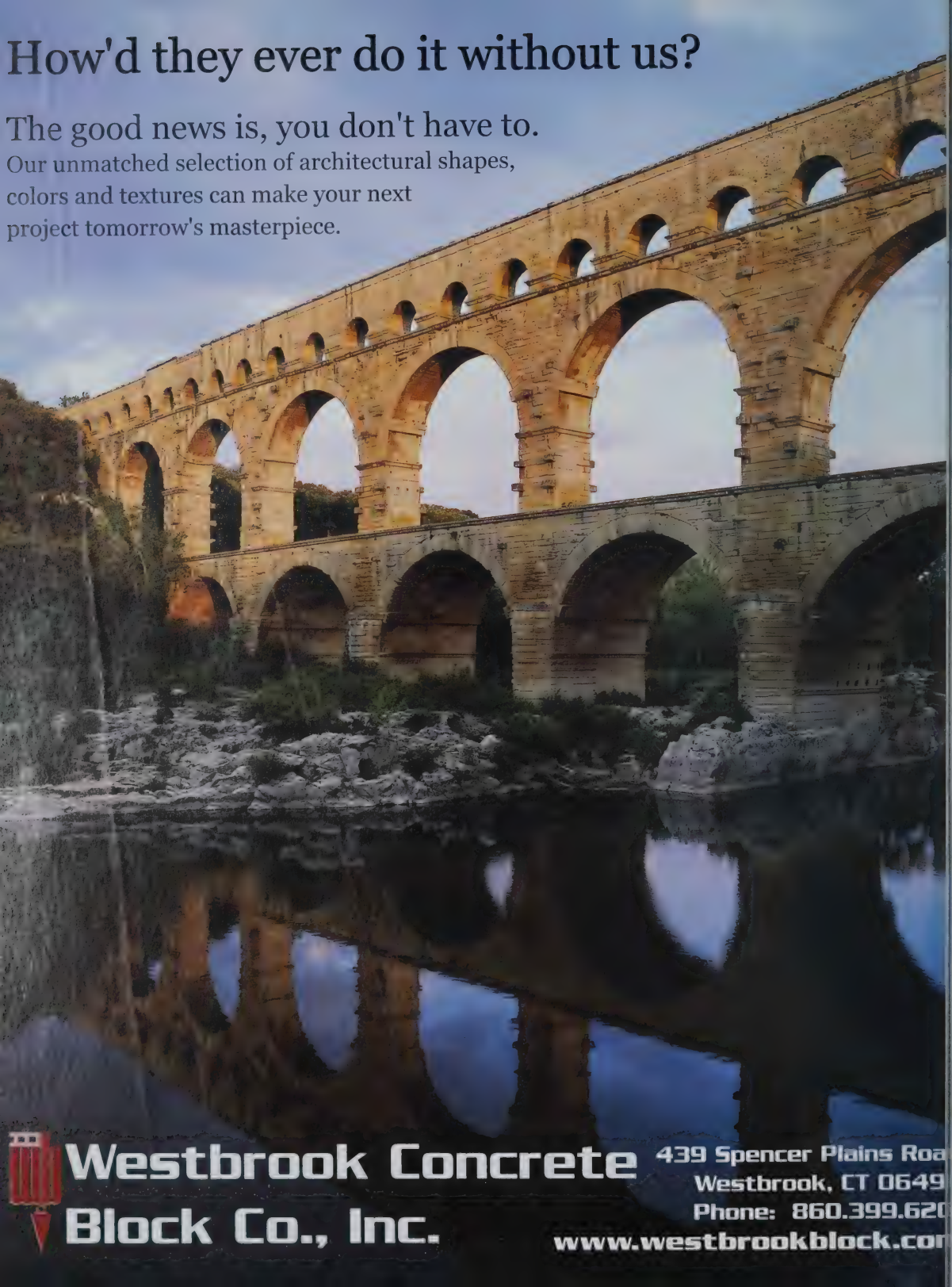
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OPEN: New Designs for Public Space

National Building Museum
Washington, DC
January 15 – May 15, 2005

OPEN: New Designs for Public Space, an exhibition organized by the Van Alen Institute, unites 20 projects from cities worldwide. The designs represent innovative approaches to urban experiences of community, collective memory, recreation, and delight.

The exhibition's strong suit is the diverse selection of projects, particularly the variety in scale. OPEN affirms the value of the small gesture, sensory experience, and finesse in urban design.

The projects are loosely grouped by form or purpose: the plaza, street, memorial, information, and venue. Despite these distinctions, OPEN links them all as egalitarian sites for culture and political action. Presented as a positive response to today's security concerns, the exhibition finds public space underground, behind glass, and perched atop 50 stories. But OPEN does not address the fact that remote locations and admissions fees — not to mention surveillance features like London's CCTV cameras and metal detectors — can distort our understanding of "open." Inside, upstairs, and screened, public space becomes distanced and exclusive. The projects' ubiquitous cafés may ensure commercial activity, but the exhibition's optimistic view of civic triumph is tenuous.

The exhibition design also uses screens. A continuous presentation panel extends around the gallery, punctuated by small video monitors. The text is minuscule; the videos are on "mute." The display encourages visitors, all rendered effectively myopic, to consume the glut of description without standing back to consider the designs. OPEN raises the final question: How do we curate space?

Eleanor Pries is a graduate student at the University of Virginia.

Architecture in Perspective 19

Boston Architectural Center
December 15–30, 2004

The Boston Architectural Center provided an especially appropriate venue for *Architecture in Perspective 19*, the exhibition of the American Society of Architectural Illustrators annual international competition. Students, who are developing and refining their own illustration skills, seemed inspired by the outstanding drawing techniques, from watercolor to digital media, in works ranging from formal illustration to simple sketches.

The exhibition was a testament to the value and beauty of carefully crafted drawings — especially hand-crafted drawings. Still, the jury's selection of nine digital images suggests the increasing validity and recognition of computer graphics as architectural illustration. The work ranged from informal, fantastical, and pensive sketches suggestive of a design process, to images where close inspection was necessary to determine that they were not photographs.

The drawings, with some additional works, are recorded in an attractive color catalogue, which can be seen on the ASAI website (*www.asai.org*).



Andrea Ruedy, Assoc. AIA, is an intern-architect at Goody Clancy in Boston and a drawing instructor at the BAC.

Timothy Love AIA Conversations on Architecture

The Boston Society of Architects
January 11, 2005

as the youth hired by Machado and Silvetti Associates to run the sprawling Getty Museum project, or later, as the pizza-bearing project manager who got an entire neighborhood behind the "radical" design of the Allston Branch library. In his latest incarnation, Love is the president, vice-president, and treasurer of Utile Inc., an architecture firm in Downtown Crossing, Boston. During his tenure at SOM in New York and later at Machado and Silvetti, Love thought a lot about what's wrong with the classic star-firm paradigm. When he started Utile three years ago, his manifesto was a business plan, not a design philosophy.

The second slide Love showed his audience at the BSA Conversation on January 11 was not a sexy FormZ rendering of an unbuilt project, which is the typical offering at these monthly discussions. Instead, he presented the inelegant business-cycle chart of his company, scrawled on the back of a napkin.

This chart revealed that Love is setting about the job of kicking the collective establishment on its rear-end. He has no interest in the paths followed by many young firms: enter competitions, teach, design small residential projects, publish unbuilt designs, and hope that fame will come some day. He approaches developers by selling them on his own pre-researched development proposals. He is fluent in developer-speak, tossing around phrases like "pro-forma" and "net-to-gross calculation." He can build a 24-unit condo building with parking for $108 per square foot. He examines parcel ownership maps the way other architects look at context photographs. He mingles with building owners and planners. He pursues grants. He is a firm believer in creating opportunity.

So how's the architecture going? Love showed two projects in construction: the aforementioned condominiums and a new block of townhouses, both in South Boston. This isn't rarefied, shiny-magazine material; instead, Love reaches for an unthreatening sophistication that is carefully calibrated to bring good design to the broadest possible market. Love knows and cares about design excellence, and is widely considered to be a thoughtful, talented guy. He is also a realist. His approach is more entrepreneurial than, say, SOM, but ultimately they're going after the same client. Will he catch a wave of clients with a sophisticated palate, or will the market, typically indifferent to design, win out? Stay tuned....

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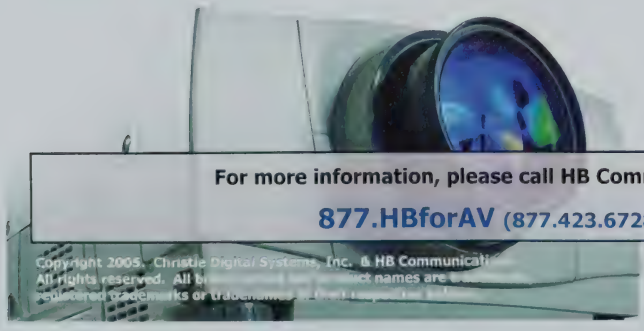
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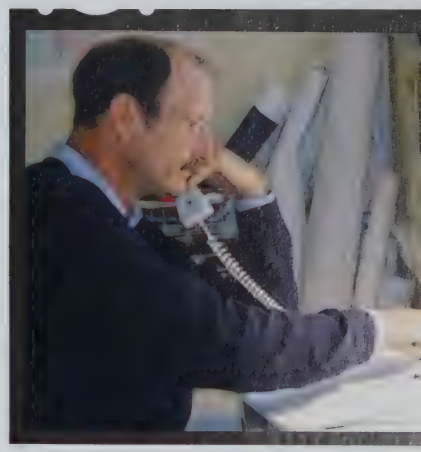


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A Day with a Graphic Designer



The designer: Jon Roll, president of Jon Roll & Associates, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

The firm: A staff of 10 designers, specializing in signage, labeling, and interpretive graphics — work that helps people to navigate and understand buildings and public spaces.

The office: The second floor of a large 1820s house in Harvard Square. The office is essentially one big airy room, divided into workspaces by two massive chimneys with back-to-back fireplaces. The walls are lined with art books, graphic journals, and numerous white binders chronicling previous projects. A radio is tuned to Harvard's exam-period orgies — hours of Ray Charles followed by hours of Rachmaninoff.

The day:

7:30 Arriving at this hour, Jon is able to snag an on-street parking space, a rarity in Harvard Square.

7:35 Takes a cup of coffee, which he never gets around to drinking. Looks at the stuff on his desk and his computer, thinking aloud about what needs to get done today: "Way too much."

What's really exciting him this morning is yesterday's presentation to the Arnold Arboretum about a possible signage project. Doing preparatory research, Jon was intrigued to learn that the Arboretum was laid out according to the Bentham and Hooker sequence, a plant-classification system devised by British botanists in the 1870s. The sequence groups plants according to blossom structure, and was intended as a reference tool, not a planting scheme. But Olmsted and Sargent, the Arboretum's designers, used topography and curving paths to accommodate plants' diverse soil and light requirements, positioning horticulturally strange bedfellows in correct scholarly order.

It's a story, and Jon likes stories. He's already beginning to imagine using elements of graphic design — maps and signage — but he's also considering a cell phone system that would let visitors call in and listen to pre-recorded information. "The place is a living reference book. But it's also a public park, and our labeling needs to address different audiences: the casual visitor, the expert, and the *expert* expert. How do we orient people without being intrusive?"

9:10 Reviews a signage project for Bennington College with a senior designer who has worked with him on and off for 20 years. They presented design concepts at the college a few days ago, and now are incorporating the responses for a presentation to the trustees in New York next week. They whip through a list of things to be done, speaking in a shorthand possible only between longtime colleagues. He looks at a mock-up of a sign for the college arts center. "Hmm, that text size, you might want to —"

"Yup, yup, I already noticed that," she says.

9:45 Another colleague of years, a writer, shows up to accompany Jon to a brainstorming session regarding the Charlestown Navy Yard. Under the state's Chapter 91 regulations, any development there needs to provide continuous public waterfront access, amenities, and interpretive information. The Navy Yard has been studied and analyzed many times already; the challenge for the project team will be to come up with ideas that don't feel like just another iteration of the same old thing.

9:50 Jon and his colleague leave for the meeting. In the car, they marvel at today's front-page *Boston Globe* article, which recommends 60 to 90 minutes of exercise each day.

Jon: "Who has that kind of time?"

10:00 Besides Jon and the writer, the meeting includes a team of urban planners and an artist who does installations in public spaces. Sitting around a table in the artist's studio, the group focuses on several key issues. Right now the Navy Yard is an obstacle course of concrete barriers and unclear access points. What would make it an appealing destination? What kind of pathway could run along the water's edge? Jon has brought along several boards on which he's pasted old photographs and engravings showing the shipyard's industrial and military history. "What are the stories this place wants to tell?"

11:20 As the meeting continues, different perspectives emerge. The planners are concerned with circulation: how would people move through the space? Jon and the artist start to think about what the place might look like. The blank-slateness of the site appeals to them. They keep saying, "Whatever happens here, it needs to be big." With the exception of the USS *Constitution*, the current Navy Yard is oddly invisible. With bold enough design elements and infrastructure, it could have a dramatic visual impact from both land and water.

"We need a repeating element that creates a path along the harbor and resonates with the whole waterfront. How do you do that without being hackneyed?"

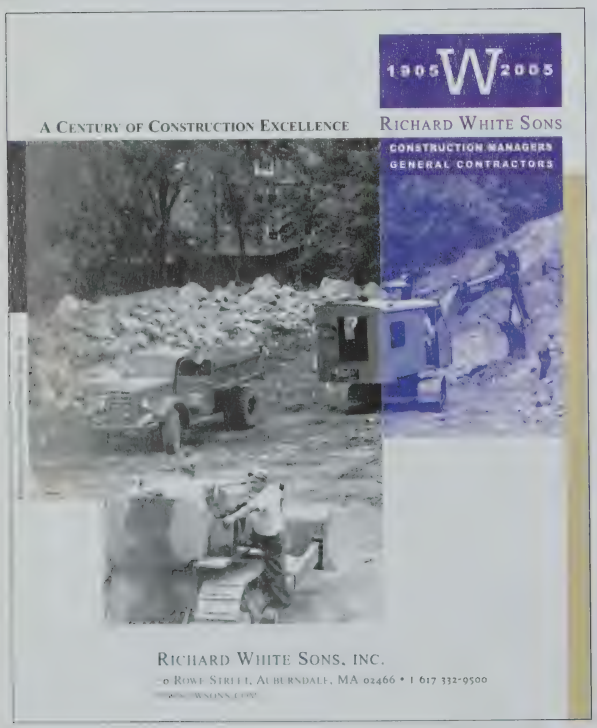
Jon: "We need a repeating element that creates a path along the harbor and resonates with the whole waterfront. How do you do that without being hackneyed, without just doing some dumb light on a pole?"

12:45 "We've covered a lot, and I'm toast," Jon says. The group lists tasks to be completed before their next session, and the meeting breaks up.

Inching through traffic on the Harvard stadium bridge, Jon and the writer riff on the classic rhetorical question: Why are the most interesting jobs the public ones with the least money? They move on to a more practical financial discussion: How much more time can they afford to put in, given the project's budget; and how should that time best be spent?

1:05 The parking space outside the office is gone — no surprise — and Jon stashes his car in a nearby garage.

1:25 Jon checks in again with the designer on the Bennington project. The design concept behind the signage —





simple shapes that allude to sculpture without pretending to be sculpture — grew out of the fact that the Bennington landscape reminded Jon of Storm King, the outdoor museum on the Hudson. Now the designer is refining the overall look of the new signage, Cor-Ten steel on which notices, in bright foliage-inspired colors, can be hung with magnets. She uses the computer to show Jon different options for the main entrance sign. To the right of the drive, or the left? How close to the road? Type flush-right or flush-left? Will the sign be readable after a two-foot snowfall?

Before proceeding with the final signs, the designers will field-test several mock-ups, to make sure that the materials still look good after oxidation and "a bunch of knocking around."

2:40 Phone call from an architect, asking to meet about three project proposals. Jon is smiling when he hangs up. "If your client is a restaurant, that's just one job. If you work for the architect who designs the restaurant, he goes on to design something else."

3:25 Phone call from the broker who administers the firm's 401(k) plan. Jon wants him to come in and sit down with the staff. "It's good for morale when people understand where the money is and what the strategy is."

He interrupts himself to call across to the designer on the Bennington project, whose computer screen is visible from his desk: "Much, much better. That other way you had it was just so freakin' *ugly*."

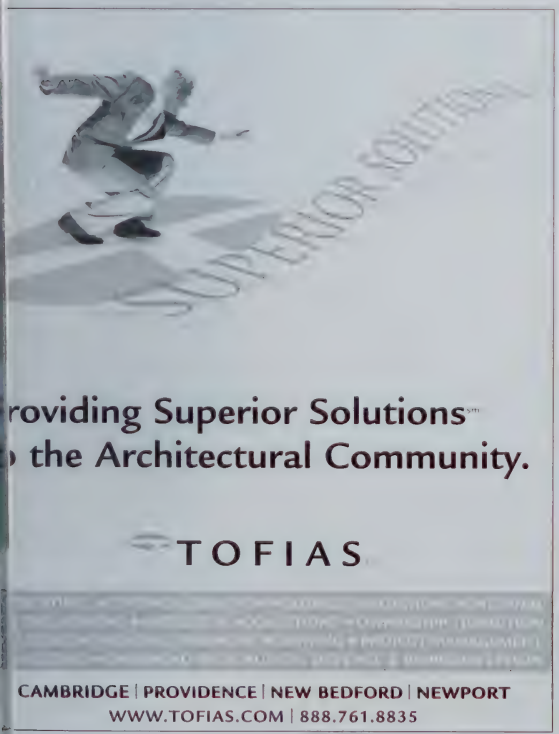
She grins back. "I know."

4:20 Sits down with another designer to review a signage program for Brandeis University. The campus requires particularly clear signage because circulation patterns, especially for cars, are confusing. Also, as Jon points out, "It's 1948 International Style — which poses a different set of challenges from a Georgian Revival campus, where the architecture of a building connotes its function." The client liked the origami-like folds of one set of signage concepts, but preferred the "gestalt" of the type treatment in the other. Jon and the designer accept this vacillation philosophically, and discuss how the two concepts could be blended.

5:10 The conversation has ranged from the history of Brandeis to the fun of designing signs for a modernist campus ("You're free to do anything"), to further refinements of the typography and colors.

Jon takes one last look at the design boards, swooping down from the big-picture overview to focus in on a detail. He points to a small, quirkily asymmetrical "Parking" sign. "These might be over-designed. They're going to crank out hundreds of these, at $25 apiece. Keep them simple." ■

Joan Wickersham lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She is the author of *The Paper Anniversary* and is finishing a new book.





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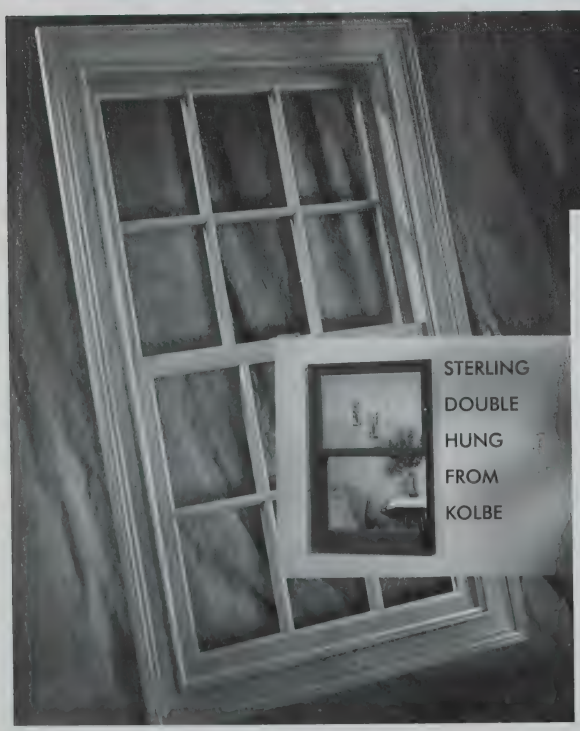




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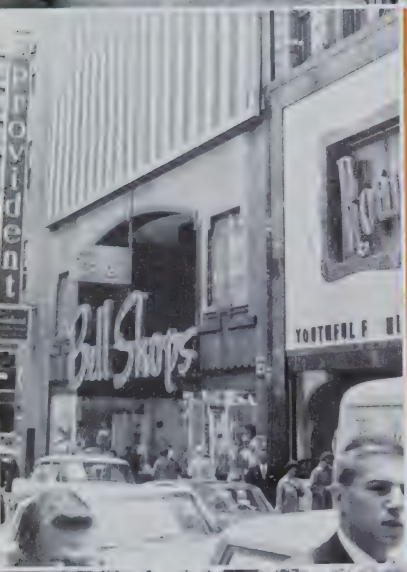
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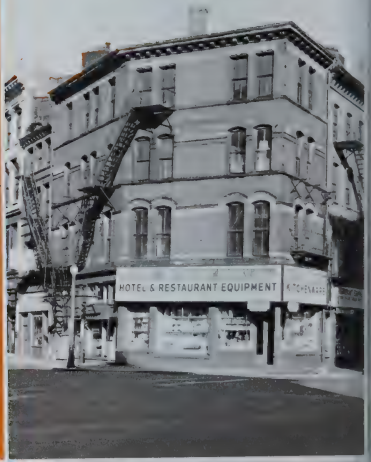
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The Way We Were: Boston in the '60s

To understand City Hall, you need to understand that Boston was once a very different city

PARTICIPANTS

[redacted] is a professor of history and architecture at MIT, where he was head of the department of architecture from 1991 to 2005. He moved to Boston in 1963.

[redacted] is an attorney in Boston. He served as corporation counsel for the city of Boston from 1968 to 1979 during the administration of Mayor Kevin White.

[redacted] is the president of the Friends of the Public Garden and a founder of the Greenspace Alliance. He was a resident of Beacon Hill at the time of the construction of City Hall.

[redacted] is a principal of Leers Weinzapfel Associates and an adjunct professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Design. She was a graduate student at MIT at the time of the building's construction.

[redacted] is the editor of *ArchitectureBoston*.

[redacted] has been a state representative since 1983, representing the South End and the Fenway districts. He was previously the director of the Museum of African-American History and was a community organizer at the time of the building's construction.

[redacted] founded Stahl Associates in Boston in 1961, which later merged with Burt Hill Kosar Rittelmann. He began his career in Boston with the design of the State Street Bank Building, which was completed in 1965.

[redacted] is the principal of Joan Wood Associates in Boston. At the time of the construction of City Hall, she was a resident of the South End and a political activist, and she was married to the building's project manager.

Opposite page, clockwise from top left: Train yard at the Prudential Center, ca. 1955. 17-56 Winter Street, 1964. Intersection of Washington and Hanover streets, Haymarket Square, ca. 1960. Crawford House Café entrance, 19 Scollay Square, ca. 1960. Public Garden, Boston, ca. 1960. 36 Winter Street, 1964.

Elizabeth Padjen: Boston City Hall represents a very deliberate turning point in the city's history and was intended to launch what was continually referred to as "the New Boston." Since the building's completion in 1968, much has been forgotten about that era, and there are many people who are new to Boston, or who never knew the city of that period. And yet it seems that we can't really understand this building without knowing something of its time — without having a sense of what Boston was like socially, politically, and economically.

Tad Stahl: One of the most memorable images of the Boston of that period was the steel for the Prudential tower sitting untouched in the railroad yard, month after month, for well over a year, while the 121A legislation, which was intended to protect the development from the then-legendary vagaries of Boston assessing, was being argued in the General Court. Rusting steel — that was what everybody driving into the city from the west saw.

Herb Gleason: William Zeckendorf was regarded as the smartest urban real estate developer in the country at that time. Somebody asked him, "What would you do with Boston, Mr. Zeckendorf?" And he said, "The first thing I'd do is tear the whole goddamn place down."

"The suburbs were getting richer, and Boston worried that it was going to be the hole in the doughnut."

— Byron Rushing



Byron Rushing: The competition for the new city hall was announced in 1961. From 1961 to 1968, when the building opened, there was a major shift in how Boston saw itself. I'm not sure if we had held the competition in 1968 that we would have ever had this building. In 1961, Boston was still trying to figure out if it was going to be part of the new prosperity of the region. The population of Boston had fallen dramatically in the 1950s — I used to remind [City Councilor] Jim Kelly that white people started leaving Boston long before there were any black people moving in. With new highways like 128 and the exodus from the city, the suburbs were getting richer, and Boston worried that it was going to be the hole in the doughnut. The big question was, how do you revive this city?

Stan Anderson: The city was physically a very different place from what it is today. For example, Boston had the harbor, of course, but there was no real connection to it, physically or otherwise. There were dilapidated buildings all along Atlantic Avenue, and no one paid much attention. It took years to convince people that the waterfront was actually a resource.

Byron Rushing: That's right, and that was the reason they could build the Central Artery and Southeast Expressway where they did: It was cheap land and it was the path of least resistance. No one cared.

Tad Stahl: The city was empty on weekends. The central business district was locked down, the Back Bay was empty. You had to walk miles and miles on a Sunday to find a newspaper. The market district adjacent to the City Hall site was on its last legs, shuttered up and partially burned.

Henry Lee: We should also remember the political circumstances of the time. There was enormous animosity between the people in City Hall and the people on State Street, which had been going on for quite a long time. [Mayor James Michael] Curley had exacerbated this condition greatly, and it was [Mayor John] Hynes, to his glory, who began the healing process. [Mayor John] Collins was able to continue that rapprochement between the business and political forces. It is in that light that you have to see the whole development of City Hall and its environs. Something new was going to happen — not economically, necessarily, but socially and politically.

Herb Gleason: One example of that rapprochement was Bob Morgan, the president of the Boston Five Cent Savings Bank, who agreed to serve as the chairman of the Government Center Commission — which sponsored the competition and acted as the client. He was the epitome of the responsible participating business leader.

Joan Wood: Morgan managed to keep the process absolutely clean, although the city in general was not — politically it was very, very iffy.

Elizabeth Padjen: The word that appears repeatedly in newspaper stories of that time is "cronyism."

Joan Wood: Yes. Morgan's commission, which also oversaw the construction, was very broad-based and included labor people, business people, and the politicians. Everybody together had an interest in making sure that they didn't mess it up. They knew they had to hold it together. Remember, a lot was at stake. All of the South End was redlined when I moved there — you could not get a mortgage.

Tad Stahl: My hero in this story is Jim Lawrence, the architect, who conceived the notion of a competition and made it happen. Of all the places in the world to sell a competition of this magnitude for this kind of building, Boston was the least likely. Jim was wonderful — one of the most charming and talented human beings I've ever met, and totally dedicated to the city and urban life in general. He worked very quietly. It was not a public affair.

Herb Gleason: Henry mentioned the relationship between City Hall and State Street. But the neighborhoods had a role,

too. This was the same time that the NAACP was starting to get furious about the school situation, although the busing crisis didn't really hit until the 1970s. There was growing civic participation — people like Byron were organizing neighborhoods, partially in opposition to Ed Logue.

Byron Rushing: There were big battles in Mission Hill, Charlestown, and Roxbury. I started organizing in Lower Roxbury, which Logue wanted to designate as an urban renewal area and clear to build a high school. That was all — a school. And that was how we came to set up one of the first CDCs [community development corporations] in the country — Lower Roxbury Community Corporation. You could argue that all of the organizing at that time was a response to some aspect of urban renewal.

Elizabeth Padjen: Was the Government Center site considered a no-man's land that didn't really belong to a neighborhood?

Byron Rushing: That's right. The closest neighborhood was the West End, and that was already gone. The North End was on the other side of the Central Artery. So it had no real constituency.

Stan Anderson: You have to put this in the architecture context as well. In 1961, there was not yet a glimmer of Postmodernism — although by the building's completion in 1968, there were a few nudges in that direction; Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction* was published in 1966. But there was widespread disillusionment with the character of American Modern architecture, especially with what was happening in corporate buildings and housing. That disillusionment created the opportunity for Kallmann and McKinnell to endorse an aspect of European architecture that was strong and gutsy and had presence. They demonstrated that you could draw on history without being derivative, and that you could design a building with monumental stature that was still inventive.

Elizabeth Padjen: 1961 was also the year that Jane Jacobs' book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, was published. Did it have an immediate impact?

Byron Rushing: That book popularized the whole idea of planning. Everybody started reading it. I remember reading it as a civil-rights organizer. In the context of the urban renewal era, it was anti-planning or, rather, pro-democratic planning.

Andrea Leers: There was a confluence of ideas and conditions. The city had a real sense of urgency about saving itself, and at the same moment, there was interest in new ways of representing government in an era when Modern architecture meant glass boxes, which were seen as a corporate expression. Some architects began to search for that kind of symbolic architecture in European models. Boston City Hall was one of a number of buildings at that time that were inspired by Le Corbusier's late work, particularly his monastery at La Tourette; there were several in Japan, and many in England. Another model was Aalto's Town Hall in Saynatsalo. These buildings were relatively new, so they were still very alive and very powerful expressions of civic symbolism. It's to Boston's credit that, despite its survival mode, there was a belief that somehow the new city hall ought to have a civic presence.

Henry Lee: But it was also a psychological moment that wasn't there 30 years before. And, as Byron pointed out, it wasn't there a few years later. It was a moment when people were willing to embrace a real break with the recent past because it represented a city that had become so desolate — economically, politically, and socially. One of the extraordinary things about City Hall was its acceptance by a large group of conservative laymen, people who you would never imagine would think it was a grand structure. Walter Muir Whitehill — the historian and director of the Boston Athenaeum — embraced it. The historian Thomas Boylston Adams to his dying day thought it was the best building he ever saw.

Elizabeth Padjen: According to the competition guidelines, the city could choose not to build the winning project. For the first-stage competition that led to a short list of eight proposals, the jury included the architects Pietro Belluschi, Walter Netsch, Ralph Rapson, and William Wurster, and local business leader Harold Hodgkinson, the chairman of Filene's. For the second stage, they were joined by Kelley Anderson, the president of New England Mutual Life, and Sidney Rabb, chairman of Stop & Shop. Lawrence Anderson, who was the head of the MIT architecture department, served as the competition adviser. The jurors were unanimous in their selection. The business community bought into it unanimously. And what is even more amazing, the building was built exactly as it was presented in the competition. Clearly, something was happening in the city — as we know from our own recent experience, illustrious juries and commissions don't guarantee results.

Tad Stahl: My sense is that things were organized quietly. With a few key civic leaders, John Collins managed to pull together a group that had influence and authority. I give Collins a lot of credit for opening up the city and making it possible for people to imagine things that couldn't be done in a really corrupt environment.

Herb Gleason: Ed Logue, of course, was a major force. Ed came to Boston in 1960 to direct the renewal effort — after the clearance of the West End, as he spent most of his later years reminding people. But Collins had already opened the way for change.

Henry Lee: One good example was my cousin Henry Shattuck, who was a quiet force in Boston for a very long time. He very strongly supported Collins, and later Logue, which surprised everybody, because he was very conservative. But he was among those people who saw this great need for change. It touched a lot

of other movers and shakers in the city — not just the business community. At some point, everybody saw that it was in their interest.

Elizabeth Padjen: Can you remember some of your first impressions of the building?

Joan Wood: I remember waiting for the unveiling, which was literally an unveiling — there was a sheet over the model that someone pulled off. People were really impressed. It was a *designed* building, which none of the other entries really was. And I remember being really excited about it. Later, after the building was completed, I got hooked into organizing the opening party for the construction workers. They were supposed to get coffee and cookies, but I managed to get donated hotdogs and beer. There was a blizzard that day, but 500 people showed up anyway. They were all so proud of their work and their building. They thought it was absolutely weird, but they loved it.

Herb Gleason: When I saw the picture in the *Globe* of what had been chosen, I thought, my God, what is going on here? But then I went to the exhibition of all the finalists at the MFA. Kallmann and McKinnell's was the only scheme that came even close to understanding Boston city government. Most of the finalists had fallen into the trap of "the dome." A dome simply had nothing to do with Boston city government; it presumed a city council grandly deliberating under it. Kallmann and McKinnell realized that, in Boston, the city council was, if not peripheral, only a coordinate branch.

Tad Stahl: I loved the vocabulary of the building — the materials, the details. And I really respected its complexity — the interrelationships and connections that responded to what was a very demanding program.

Andrea Leers: I used to visit the construction site frequently. I remember worming my way in shortly before it opened, going up into the mayor's chambers and watching the contractors in their buckets trying to wire the light fixtures in each of the coffers of the concrete ceiling. It was a vivid demonstration of how something on paper and in the imagination can be nearly impossible to build. But what we all loved was the spatial dynamic of the building, the way you moved through the plaza and under the big spaces.

Herb Gleason: When the building was under construction, I ran into Bill LeMessurier, who was the structural engineer. I said, "How's it going, Bill?" and he said, "We've decided it would have been easier to pour the concrete and chop out the space." It was an extraordinary structural system.

Henry Lee: One of the later criticisms of the building was that it's much too monumental, yet that was something that everybody was very much looking for at that time. As a layman looking at the building, I was, and I still am, impressed. I liked the fact that it had a stateliness. Maybe it's because I'd been working in Washington, and that's the way I felt public buildings ought to be — impressive. It's important for a city hall to have presence, not because your city government is all-powerful and great, but because it is yours.

Stan Anderson: And this was clearly a civic building. I remember thinking later, when Nixon was impeached, that the monumental buildings in Washington *allowed* the citizens and their representatives to act in a powerful way; the buildings created a setting that acknowledged, maybe justified, their power. I think that's why we need a city hall like this one.

Byron Rushing: One thing to understand about the building's reception is that it was controversial from the beginning, but not so controversial that there was a call for it to be changed or undone. Even the people who said they didn't like it, didn't actively hate it. No one wanted to get rid of it. Some controversial buildings develop a whole creation myth about the roots of the conflict that become part of the way you look at the building. That was not the case here.

Herb Gleason: John Collins moved into the building in dead winter, before it was finished or even heated, because he wanted to occupy it before his term ended. Then Kevin White had his inauguration in the Great Hall — he loved the building.

Joan Wood: Kevin White organized all sorts of wonderful parties there — children's parties and concerts, including one where the Symphony performed in the Great Hall.

Herb Gleason: That's when we discovered that the acoustics were impossible. There were lots of gatherings, lots of parties, lots of community meetings. And that is what really contributed greatly to the building's original good looks and to its positive feeling of hospitality. Ray Flynn and Tom Menino do not like the building and it shows, because they have treated it like a slum. They haven't maintained it, and then they say it's an ugly building.

Henry Lee: One of the practical problems that you just touched upon is that any suggestions for improving the interiors were usually shot down by the subsequent mayors partly, I suspect, because they didn't want to appear to be spending public money on "frills." At the State House, Senator Bulger said, "To heck with the criticism," and he went ahead and renovated the whole Senate President suite very nicely, and all his successors can now enjoy it. But this didn't happen in City Hall because I think Ray Flynn in particular was afraid of losing some populist support. I worked with Jim Lawrence on a committee to make recommendations for interior improvements. Here was the man who was in a manner of speaking the father of the building and, sad to say, he was totally ignored. And you finally just had to give up.

Joan Wood: It's a lesson in design strategy. There were all kinds of things — like tapestries in the Great Hall — that were necessary to the ultimate complete success of the building but were too easy to eliminate. And of course closing off so much of the public passages and access killed the animation of the building. And yet I remember the pride people took in it — the secretaries, the people at the front desk, all got dressed up for work, which they never did in the old City Hall.

Herb Gleason: Indeed. Then in later years, it became fashionable to denounce the place as unworkable and inconvenient, because people pick up the signals from the leadership. That, in my judgment, simply was not true. It was a very workable, remarkably flexible building. And the public spaces downstairs are absolutely marvelous. It's a difficult building to find your way around in, because nobody tells you how to do it and there was never a good signage system. That was one design mistake — all the office signs were put on the doors, and the doors were usually open. So if you looked down a corridor, nothing would tell you where to go.

Elizabeth Padjen: An article from *The Boston Globe* dated May 4, 1962, referring to City Hall, speculated, "How fashionable, how durable is the modern design? Will it seem right to people in 2000 or merely dated?" The year 2000, of course, had all sorts of futuristic, science fiction connotations. Even though the building is firmly of its era, I don't see it as being dated in the way that term is usually used. It's not passé. It still has an energy to it, doesn't it?

Andrea Leers: Yes, I think it still has its original vigor. I must say at the time it was a very exciting building for young architects, for anyone interested in design. It was an actual built example of what we had read about or seen at a distance. It meant that there was a way to make an important public building without making it a classical building or a neo-Victorian building. It had an energy, a robustness, a solidity that are still evident. What all of us who were excited about it have since learned is that the buildings of that era, not just this one, were successful in some ways, and less successful in others. All the buildings of that period taught us the limitations of reinforced concrete as a finish material. And we learned some of the limitations of spatially complex arrangements, which did create a certain degree of confusion. But we wouldn't have known that had we not built them.

Stan Anderson: It's easy to condemn the building today as being derivative of Le Corbusier. But in fact, it reinvented some of Le Corbusier's ideas, and adapted them to this site and to this purpose. It is obviously of its time. You can see its relationship to other buildings of the period. But it still has a recognizable integrity of its own.

Henry Lee: It is hard to evaluate the building today without addressing the Plaza, which I've always found deplorable for various reasons. To what extent is the placement of the building to blame for the emptiness?

Tad Stahl: I think the sequence was wrong. The I.M. Pei master plan created a plaza as a place to put a building without any idea of what that building might be. And they were looking at precedents like the Campo in Siena, which really had nothing to do with Boston. I frankly think that same building in a much smaller space would be much stronger.

Herb Gleason: I think if it were in a smaller space, it would be overpowering. The location for the building was not Pei's arbitrary choice, but what the subway dictated. The problem is that the space leaks — it needs an enclosure, a bold statement that says, "This is the edge of this space." We should have something in the space that is lively and stimulating. We used to have a lot of exhibitions on City Hall Plaza, even an outdoor show of monumental sculpture, which was marvelous.

Henry Lee: I have proposed exactly that, a temporary sculpture exhibition,

"It's important for a city hall to have presence, not because your city government is all-powerful and great, but because it is yours."

— Henry Lee



Scott Swanson, South Boston, ca. 1971.

at least five times, not only in connection with Jim Lawrence's group, but also when I served on the Art Commission. The architecture firm Albert, Righter & Tittmann came up with a wonderful proposal a few years ago for filling the square in the summer with all kinds of little stores and booths — a movable feast, literally. It was a wonderful design. If they could have raised the funds, they would have brought a lot of life to what is certainly on weekends and evenings a completely dead area. But there's so much negativity about proposals of this nature that they always get shot down somewhere. To change the nature of that area will take, not just thinking in spatial and architectural terms, but a change in mindset with respect to the activities and the kind of life that we want to see there.

Joan Wood: There's an anti-arts, anti-intellectual aura — and also a lack of humor — that has settled over city government, so when you try to do something that has a little spirit or a little joy, it gets squashed.

Henry Lee: Do you realize there's not a single piece of interesting Modern sculpture in the city of Boston? It's a curious thing — we had this sudden burst of Modernism that allowed us to build City Hall in the '60s, but we are still an awfully conservative city when it comes to the arts.

Elizabeth Padjen: How did the city become so conservative again so quickly? What caused the shift away from the energy and that expansive view that people had in the '60s?

Tad Stahl: I think because everybody thought the city was dying, the majority of people with any money and any influence chose to live in the suburbs; they didn't live in the city. The handful of people who were left were smart and stubborn and committed people like Jim Lawrence and Bob Morgan, and they got things done because everybody else had lost interest. Now everybody's back in the city and it has attracted a lot of basically conservative people.

Herb Gleason: I'm going to disagree with you. What has happened in all of the neighborhoods is really marvelous. I agree with Joan that there's no joy downtown, and there's no joy in City Hall. But there is joy in many, many neighborhoods. What has been done by countless hands, through private efforts and private decisions, is breathtaking. The BRA, in terms of helping to foster good design in the neighborhoods, has really been quite astonishing. And so let's not forget this positive expression, even though it's on a very local scale, and a very private scale.

Byron Rushing: One reason for that is that most of those people who were involved stayed involved in various ways.

Andrea Leers: The spirit of the New Boston didn't end with the completion of City Hall. It continued to bring life back to the heart of the city. The Quincy Market area was surely an outcome of that kind of energy, as was the redevelopment of the waterfront. I would say that its influence lasted for at least another 10 years. But then, the gradual recognition that "renewal" was harmful to other qualities of urban life, coupled with the growing historic preservation movement, really put the brakes on any further kind of energetic thinking. I think that's the condition that we inherited through most of the '80s that persists to some extent today.

Elizabeth Padjen: Would you say the concurrent growth of civic activism and citizen participation in design review contributed to that?

Andrea Leers: I can't say — there were certainly a lot of very vocal groups, but I don't know that they made the difference. I think there was a broader retrenchment, a reaction to the fact that we had destroyed whole districts of our city, from which we still haven't recovered. Maybe we're beginning to see the light.

Stan Anderson: I think the evidence is against you.

Elizabeth Padjen: City Hall could not be built today.

Andrea Leers: No, it couldn't.

Herb Gleason: You have to remember that we've had at least 16 years of a national government which preaches against government and against the public sector, and that makes a difference. Logue could never have done what he did in Boston had he not had marvelous support, not just financial support but also intellectual support, from Washington. And that's gone.

Henry Lee: You see the effects in the debate about the Greenway parks. The message is that the government is not going to pay for anything in the parks.

Andrea Leers: And that's been the trouble with City Hall Plaza. I sat for many years on commission after commission and countless design juries about what to do about City Hall Plaza. There are plenty of things we could do about it. And every few meetings I would say, "You know, the City builds schools, it builds libraries, it builds all kinds of facilities. Why wouldn't it put some money into its public plaza? Why isn't that a project like any other?" But it was unthinkable. The private sector is meant to do it. And what does the private sector want to do? Build something which produces income; and in fact, many of those proposals were very viable.

Tad Stahl: And there's nothing wrong with revenue.

Andrea Leers: Absolutely nothing wrong. But the fact remains that the city does not see City Hall or the Plaza as a project worthy of public funds.

Herb Gleason: City Hall just needs to have a believer again, in order to bring it back to the style to which it should be accustomed. ▪



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The New Order

PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEVE ROSENTHAL AND CERVIN ROBINSON



Steve Rosenthal, 1976

Why do we bother to look at old images of a building many of us already know so well? For the same reason that we pore over old family snapshots. There's Dad in his uniform, Mom in her graduation gown, all the kids sitting on the porch of that vacation house. Old photographs of familiar faces remind us of who we were.

Steve Rosenthal's beautiful exterior images of the Boston City Hall, taken just a few years after its official opening, recall the building in its youthful glory; Cervin Robinson's interior images even suggest a certain glamour. Yes, it is monumental. But it is also vigorous and energetic, at once optimistic and mysterious. It was the perfect icon for a city that was ready to take risks, a city in which politicians, residents, and business leaders could stand behind one powerful idea.

This was "the New Boston." And we haven't been the same since.

— Elizabeth S. Padjen FAIA



Steve Rosenthal, 1974



Steve Rosenthal, 1974



Steve Rosenthal, 1974







Cervin Robinson. 1979

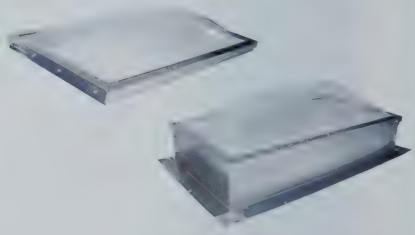
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Original Thinking

Reflections on the Genesis of Boston City Hall

BY GERHARD KALLMANN FAIA AND MICHAEL McKINNELL FAIA

Reflecting on Boston City Hall more than 40 years after its design, we recognize that this was for us a seminal work. Our first and probably most significant building, it defined the major themes that shaped the architecture of the buildings that followed. Though there are obvious differences of style and form in our later work, our preoccupations have essentially remained the same: linkage to the urban fabric and landscape, spatial complexity, the poetics of construction, the language of architecture, and metaphor.

These ideas were initially developed through our theoretical investigations in the design studios we were teaching at Columbia University, which we hoped to test by entering a major competition for a significant public building. We were not committed to a particular ideological position, other than that the Boston City Hall was to be a contemporary yet enduring statement, not linked to momentary fashion. We regarded the post-Miesian elegance and minimalism of that time as somewhat exhausted, and had a greater affinity with the architecture of Wright, the late work of Le Corbusier, the Brutalists, and Kahn. Instead of one simple concept, we preferred a more complex approach that would be more responsive both to the site and to the building's intended purpose. Although in general we preferred to regard buildings as fragments of the urban fabric, we came to accept the notion that City Hall should have the finite form of an emblem, while at the same time extending itself outward into the city to signify the accessibility of modern civic government.

As our first sketches show, the concept was that of a megastructure, a mini-city with massive public-access spaces accommodated in a mound imbedded in the hillside, and ceremonial spaces suspended at the *piano nobile* level with administrative floors forming the crown of the building. The movement system of the city was to be extended through the building,

providing a degree of transparency and permeability to the mass of the building.

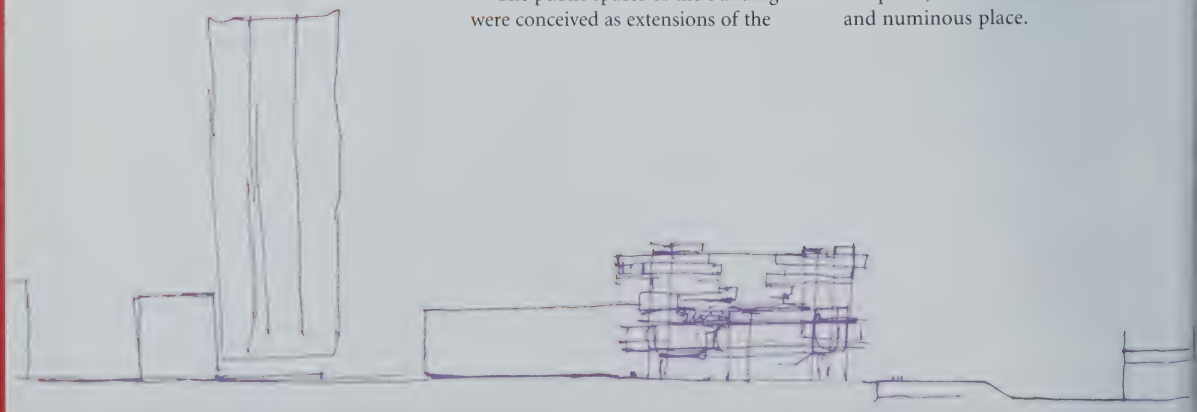
The interaction between the building and site affects both the form and structure of the City Hall in a crucial way. Set at the foot of Beacon Hill in a public square much like an arena that is entered from the constriction of Tremont Street, the City Hall acts as a fulcrum on the "Walk to the Sea," which connects Government Center with the waterfront. The contours of the hill move through the building, forming the terrains of its lower levels, which descend to New Congress Street and the markets below. Regrettably, a passage through the building and the central courtyard is now closed to the public. The sloped open space of the Plaza, more medieval than Renaissance in character, explores the topography with fan-shaped broad steps and tree-shaded terraces. The siting of the building evokes ancient structures — an acropolis, a temple, a palazzo, city ramparts. On the east side, the building descends to the level of the markets and, with a cliff-like façade, provides a backdrop for the busy life of the city.

An heroic effort of construction on a difficult site — requiring 60-feet-deep piles to reach reliable soil and spanning a subway — is celebrated in the building's language.

The public spaces of the building were conceived as extensions of the surrounding city. Such spaces of passage and informal encounter, sometimes critically described as labyrinthine or wasteful, are the essential connectors, places of meeting, celebration, and orientation that transform what could be merely a large office building into a City Hall. There are three major "spaces of the imagination" around which the City Hall is structured: the north concourse, the south entrance hall, and the courtyard. The concourse of the lower mound building is the analogue of a shopping mall with departmental counters facing the terraced balconies.

The south entrance hall, reached from the Plaza, stretches upward through the full height of the building. It is conceived as a city forum, a place of urban theater, of celebration or demonstration, where at the opening the Boston Pops played Elgar's "Pomp and Circumstance." Here the brick surface of the Plaza enters the interior and rises as an amphitheater-like monumental staircase to the courtyard level. Daylight is brought into the hall from dramatic light shafts, and glimpses of the Plaza, the Statehouse, Faneuil Hall, and the sea beyond connect this space to the city.

The courtyard, conceived — like the Cortile of the Doges' Palace in Venice — as an open space connected to the city, now is out of bounds but still acts as the center of the volumetric composition. Originally designed as a *temenos* — a sacred enclosure — and shown in the competition drawings with a monumental Henry Moore sculpture, it still remains a dramatic and numinous place.



An heroic effort of construction on a difficult site — requiring 60-feet-deep piles to reach reliable soil and spanning a subway — is celebrated in the building's language. In a close collaboration with the brilliant engineer William LeMessurier, we developed a combination of cast-in-place concrete columns and floors and precast Vierendeel trusses and façade elements, which integrated the structure and mechanical systems. More importantly, it provided an aesthetic order for the orchestration and animation of the fabric, the spaces, and the enclosure of the building.

The composition of the stratified façade relies on the interplay of the scale and texture of its materials, the brick of the lower structure, the rugged cast-in-place concrete columns and fragmented hoods of the mayor's level, and the marble-like precast fins of the crown.

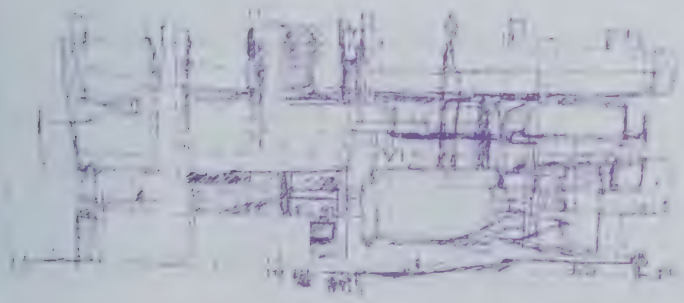
The effectiveness of the structure as a monumental building and public icon depends on the appropriateness of its metaphoric invention. To retain its attraction during changing times and tastes, we believed that the imagery had to be complex, evocative, and perhaps enigmatic. We thought it should be many-layered, alluding to subtexts of cultural memory, history, and myth. The historian Thomas Boylston Adams, our client for the subsequent commission of the American Academy in Cambridge, admired the design of the City Hall for "its many mysteries." Robert Campbell has deciphered and invented for the City Hall the narrative of an ancient castle which has endured and survived the ravages of time. An English critic has compared it to the palace at Knossos. There are no doubt other interpretations, other perceptions.

As the order of its columns and the lucid geometry of the building rises out of the land-embedded forms — much like a Michelangelesque figure from its stone — the building speaks of the order of government and the unstructured vitality of the city streets. It speaks, too, of the architects' search for an ideal platonic order in face of the contradictions of circumstance, topography, and social attitudes.

The effectiveness of the structure as a monumental building and public icon depends on the appropriateness of its metaphoric invention.

When we designed the City Hall, we envisioned not only a fragment of the city, but also a fragment in time. That is to say, we regarded the construction of the building to be the start of a process that would engage successive generations of the citizenry in the embellishment, decoration, and adornment of the robust armature that we had designed. This, to our great regret, has not happened and perhaps we were naïve. But we are naïve still, and there is still time. ■

Gerhard Kallmann FAIA and Michael McKinnell FAIA are principals of Kallmann McKinnell & Wood Architects in Boston.





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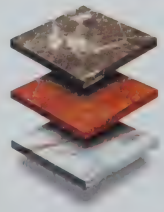
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Between a Rock and a Hard Place

Maybe some things just can't be fixed

BY THOMAS M. KEANE JR.

Older, certainly, and if possible, even grayer, the building that architects once named the sixth best in America still looks like "the crate that Faneuil Hall came in." The "bleak, expansive, and shapeless" brick plain that surrounds it remains "one of the most disappointing places in America." More than a decade after Boston's mayor vowed to fix them, City Hall and the Plaza that surrounds it really haven't changed.

With one exception. At the edge of the Plaza, along Congress Street, stands the skeletal Community Arcade, erected in 2001 and immediately mocked as "a shipwreck … a disastrous hybrid of many good intentions and too many limitations." One of those "active edges" with which architects are enamored, it has done little to change the fundamental character of this most desolate of spaces.

This is a not a story of what might be — for there are certainly reams of proposals and writings out there that express that — but rather of what was not. Since 1993, one international design competition, multiple plans, three civic advisory committees, $7 million, and the best and most fervent of intentions have wrought little, forcing one to the gloomiest of conclusions: perhaps this is a problem that simply cannot be solved.

In 1993, then-city councilor Thomas Menino got the break of a lifetime when then-mayor Raymond Flynn left to become ambassador to the Vatican. Next in line as Council president, Menino ascended the throne. Politically adept, knowledgeable in the ways of power, and personally popular, he seemed positioned to accomplish virtually anything he wanted. And one of the things he most desperately wanted was to bring grandeur to City Hall, to enliven the Plaza he called a "vast wasteland."

In early 1994, Menino launched a design competition, cosponsored by the Boston Society of Architects. He invited everyone — from architects to schoolchildren — to submit ideas. In the Athens of America, the thoughts of all were welcomed; the contest sparked much discussion, enormous goodwill, and 190 entries.

But the choice of the top five submissions in December 1994 was deflating. Two were goofy: a "video village" and re-creating the Plaza into the "Tomb of the Bambino." A third proposed an Abolitionist Museum, another suggested a playground, the last called for the space to be used to display art works.

None of those ideas was taken seriously; the design competition was ultimately little more than a frivolity.

The reason was money. By the time the competition had run its course, a new mayor who had thought the sky the limit had run up against the cold ceiling of finance. City Hall had concluded that, whatever was to happen, someone else had to pay for it. Figuring out who

1962

A world-wide design competition for City Hall attracts 256 entries. The winner is a proposal by Gerhard Kallmann, Michael McKinnell, and John Knowles.

1962

Mayor John Collins unveils scale model and reportedly gasps in horror. Horror notwithstanding, construction begins.

1968

City Hall and its surrounding Plaza are completed.

1976

An AIA poll of historians and architects names City Hall the sixth-greatest building in American history.

1988

A city survey finds only 60 percent of City Hall is suitable for municipal business. City Councilor David Scondras proposes selling it to the highest bidder.

1993

Thomas Menino becomes mayor. Hates the Plaza. Immediately orders palm trees and flowers planted to soften its image.

1994

Menino launches Ideas Competition. Menino in December names the top five winners and 11 runners-up out of 190 entries *(right)*.



1995

Menino and real estate developer Norman Leventhal organize the quasi-independent Trust for City Hall Plaza.

became the job of the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) as well as a newly created organization, the Trust for City Hall Plaza. Menino asked local developer Norman Leventhal to head the Trust. Leventhal had funded a much admired park at Post Office Square by building an underground garage. The hope was he would apply just such legerdemain to the Plaza.

And with a businessman's sense of purpose, he did just that. By the end of 1996, the Trust announced that it would commit about a quarter of the Plaza to a 350-room hotel and underground garage. Those in turn would generate up-front payments of $25 million to be used for other improvements.

Meanwhile, Menino was pushing another idea — a pedestrian bridge from the eastern edge of the Plaza to Faneuil Hall. Actually envisioned in some original plans for the area, the bridge would offer safe passage above speeding cars on Congress Street and provide a direct link between City Hall and the popular tourist attractions around Quincy Market. That, too, was proceeding smoothly.

And then both collapsed.

The two projects had been conceived and nurtured with little outside discussion. When news of the plans leaked out, opposition mounted at a furious pace. Some were upset at the lack of public process. Others wondered about what would happen to the rest of the Plaza — the promised public improvements were vague and uncertain. Preservationists questioned the footbridge. The attorney general argued in a memo that the hotel might require a two-thirds vote of the Massachusetts legislature. The Boston Civic Design Commission started demanding to see plans without a hotel and garage. And the General Services Administration (GSA), the federal agency responsible for the two federal office buildings at the south side of the Plaza, felt left out and threatened to sue. (A disclosure: A city councilor at the time, I was active in opposing both the hotel and the footbridge.)

The most worrisome opposition, however, came from those who challenged the very notion of converting a public space to private use. Since the Menino administration regarded private financing as the *sine qua non* for remaking the Plaza, this threatened to undermine the entire project.

Trying to mollify critics, the Trust responded with a concept plan for improvements on the Plaza, and Menino announced the formation of a Civic Advisory Committee (CAC). This last step backfired. Headed by Lawrence Moulter, the builder of the FleetCenter, the advisory committee was stacked with City Hall insiders. Few were fooled. When the CAC at the end of 1997 released a report backing the Trust's plans, it only generated anger.

The BRA reconnoitered. In 1998, it appointed a new CAC, this one headed by Suffolk University Law School dean John Fenton. Even as CAC#2 was holding public meetings, Menino, in a bizarre move, proposed that the city consider selling City Hall. The move seemed to undercut Fenton's efforts. Meanwhile, in another blow to the city's grand plans, the

1998

City announces a new Citizens Advisory Committee, led by Suffolk University's John Fenton. In April, Menino proposes building a new City Hall somewhere downtown. Massachusetts Historical Commission shoots down the footbridge. Enchanted Village installed on Plaza in a temporary structure during the holidays *(right)*.



1999

The Fenton-led CAC issues its report, killing the hotel and recommending modest changes. In December, the Trust issues new plans, including a new rapid transit station and a trellis-lined walkway, which eventually becomes the Community Arcade.

2000

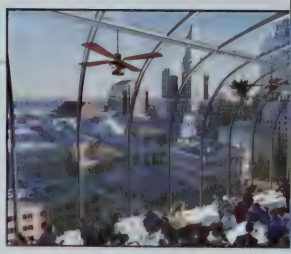
Ground is broken for Community Arcade.

1996

Menino proposes a pedestrian bridge from City Hall to Quincy Market. Trust proposes building a 350-room hotel and parking garage that will finance other improvements.

1997

Trust names Richard Friedman to build hotel. Opposition mounts. General Services Administration threatens a lawsuit. Boston Civic Design Commission expresses doubts. Trust releases a concept plan that lays out its vision for the Plaza. Architect Henry MacLean proposes "the greening of City Hall" *(right)*. Menino creates Civic Advisory Committee, headed by Lawrence Moulter. Its report supports the hotel. CAC and the report denounced as a whitewash.



Massachusetts Historical Commission effectively killed the proposed footbridge, ruling that it clashed with Faneuil Hall.

CAC#2 issued its report in 1999, rejecting the hotel and proposing a series of modest improvements along the edges of the Plaza. The Trust and BRA accepted the committee's conclusions with regard to the hotel, but continued to push for ideas such as a "civic green" and a "winter garden" that CAC#2 had discarded. By the end of the year, however, the Trust, too, had scaled back its plans, settling on an idea that eventually became the Community Arcade.

During the construction of the arcade, little else occurred. The Trust hoped that the arcade plus a planned redevelopment of the existing MBTA station would somehow spur new interest in the Plaza. When that didn't happen — the arcade was seen as a flop and the new station never materialized — and at a loss as to what it should do, the Trust organized yet another citizens' task force. Unlike the two before, this CAC was large, drawing its membership from a wide number of interests, including the GSA. But the group's report, issued in June 2003, was a disappointment. It had some ideas — none particularly exciting — but no way to afford them. A frustrated Menino gave up. So, too, did the Trust. "In the last analysis," says Robert Walsh, by then the chair of the Trust, "we got tired. It was an experiment that failed."

And why the failure? The effort to improve the Plaza had strong political and civic support. Yet no matter what was tried, nothing seemed to work. Grand plans fell apart. Small suggestions never amounted to much. An insider-driven process failed, as did one that invited public participation. True, money was always an issue. The cooperation of the GSA also was always an issue. Yet both, arguably, would have given way if everyone involved had found some compelling new idea.

That didn't happen. Certainly, there were ideas aplenty. But none was able to command widespread support in large part because of divergent and irreconcilable interests. Advocates of open space clashed with those who wanted small areas of intimacy. Public use clashed with privatization. Even a planted and greened space clashed with the idea of a civic gathering place.

There was also the problem of City Hall itself. Despite some suggestions for improvement — architect Henry MacLean's 1997 proposal for "the greening of city hall" included a roof-garden restaurant and an arcade along Congress Street — the building remained problematic. Dressing up the Plaza could do little to hide the ugliness of its most prominent feature.

So can anything be done? In the world of imagination, sure. But in the real world, where results depend upon consensus, money, and political will, the answer may be no. It's a sobering thought for architects and planners. Get it right the first time. Some mistakes, once built, can never be undone. ■

Thomas M. Keane Jr. is a columnist for the *Boston Herald*.

2001

Community Arcade opens *(below)*.



2002

Trust organizes 16-member Government Center Task Force to come up with new solutions.

2003

The Task Force in June issues a final report. Dull ideas generate an unenthusiastic response. Trust calls it quits.

2005

Ideas continue to float around — architect Henry Wood FAIA teams with landscape architect Bill Pressley to champion a new revitalization plan. Few in city government seem to have energy left to go back into battle. A solution to City Hall and its plaza seems as distant as ever.



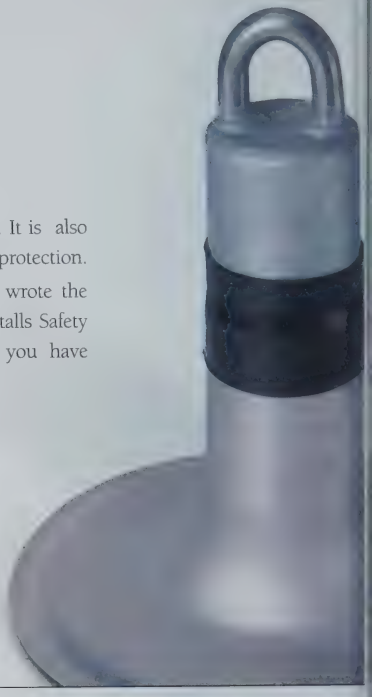
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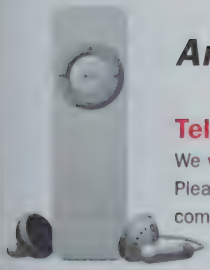
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Is well designed	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Is relevant to my interests	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Promotes understanding of design	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Is interesting and thought provoking	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

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Photo Essay	❑	❑	❑	❑
Interview	❑	❑	❑	❑
Letter from the Editor	❑	❑	❑	❑
Letters to the Editor	❑	❑	❑	❑
Ephemera (event reviews)	❑	❑	❑	❑
The Lurker (day in the life)	❑	❑	❑	❑
Periodical Roundup (magazine reviews)	❑	❑	❑	❑
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- ❑ Wood Siding
- ❑ Appliances & Fixtures
- ❑ Cabinetry/Millwork
- ❑ Ceilings
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- ❑ Furnishings
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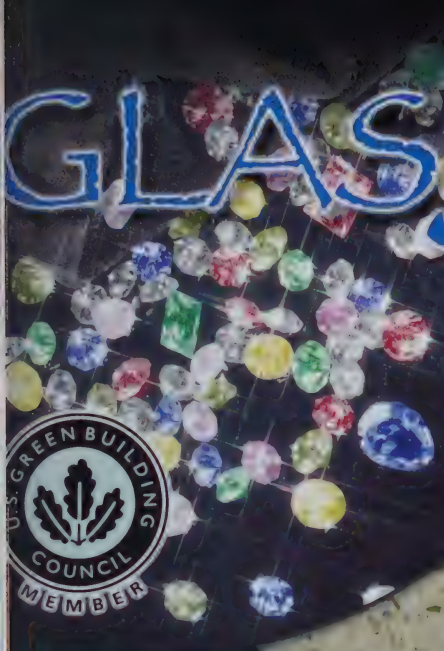
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We Don't Need Another Hero:

The Problem of Heroic Modernism

Everybody complains about '60s architecture. And everybody wants to do something about it.

BY GRETCHEN SCHNEIDER, ASSOC. AIA

It's "The End of 1960s Architecture," proclaimed *The New York Times* on Sunday, October 31, 2004. "Baby boomers are taking revenge on the blocky, Brutalist buildings of their youth," wrote Fred Bernstein. "In a society otherwise enamored of the styles of the 1960s, the architecture of that decade has long been unloved. And now it's being dismantled."

Bernstein quoted Donald Edge, a South Florida architect, who paid his last respects to one of his buildings: "'I still think it's a beautiful piece of sculpture,' Mr. Edge said of [the West Palm Beach] courthouse, a bunkerlike concrete building that his firm designed in 1969." And therein lies the problem. These beautiful sculptures are also concrete bunkers. Since October, that South Florida courthouse has been demolished.

Austin Powers, what's going on?

In our post-Watergate, post-the-Gap-is-in-Quincy Market, post-*Cheers*, post-*Friends*, post-9/11 world, it's hard to see Boston City Hall and City Hall Plaza for what they were. What looks extreme to us now — the cleared land, this concrete bunker, this big plaza, the enormous scale of it all — was completely normal then. The only radical part of Boston City Hall was that it was happening in Boston.

Everyone was doing it.

The Rise of the Heroic Moderns

At the time of Boston's Government Center competition, new "civic centers" and "center cities" were being planned in cities across the country, including Chicago, Dallas, Fort Worth, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, and New York. Any city that could afford to consider it, did. This bug hit smaller cities too, such as Fresno, Stamford, Paterson, Rochester, Albany, Frankfort,



Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller Empire State Plaza, Albany, New York. Architect: Harrison & Abramovitz. 1965–1978.

and New Haven. These were grand schemes, and not all were built. Boston was a success story.

In New York City, the proposed Civic Center plan was to add a new municipal office tower that would create a backdrop for City Hall and the Hall of Records, forming a trio of civic buildings combined with a grand landscaped mall and underground parking. Naturally, older structures would need to be demolished in the process and roads reconfigured, but that was a small price to pay for a new civic identity.

Sound familiar?

New Haven's proposed City Government project featured "a free-standing tower [that would] beat its breast in a vast open space defined by a horizontal stage set of buildings," according to historian Vincent Scully. The speculative office building would provide a backdrop to the more intricate façade of City Hall. (Providing backdrops seems to have been a favored way to suggest civic importance.) The complex, adjacent to the New Haven Green, included plans to tear down almost every building in the block along Church Street. A large, open plaza would link the new structures, with a parking garage below.

In Dallas, the Municipal Administration Center was born in the immediate aftermath of the Kennedy assassination, in an attempt to create a positive, forward-looking image for the city. Designed by I.M. Pei, Dallas' City Hall is an eight-story, inverted concrete pyramid. Pei convinced city leaders that views from the new building were crucial, and thus the city demolished several acres of nearby "dilapidated" structures. The clearance provided City Hall with a setting in a six-acre plaza, adorned with three flagpoles, a Henry Moore sculpture, an ornamental pool, and an underground garage.

In Albany, in 1959, as he accompanied a visiting foreign dignitary through New York's capital city, Governor Nelson Rockefeller was so embarrassed by its deplorable condition that he decided then and there to create Empire State Plaza. One of the largest of these government-center projects, this complex required the clearance of 98 urban acres. Ten new buildings were linked by a grand plaza with three reflecting pools, underground shops, and parking. Although the complex houses 11,000 government employees, the plaza typically seems empty.

Projects like these were a "chance to save their cities from decline, to restore them to economic prominence in their region, and to reverse the trend toward decentralization and the flight to outlying areas," wrote Mildred Schmertz in *Architectural Record* in March 1964 — an issue that featured Boston's Government Center and Prudential Center; New York's Lincoln Center, Two Columbus Circle, and the proposed World Trade Center; and Hartford's Constitution Plaza. These were optimistic projects, born from the misconceived notion that the cities were a mess.

Consider these projects: Lincoln Center was intended to position New York as a leader in the performing arts. Boston City Hall was intended to position Boston as a progressive 20th-century American city. The World Trade Center was intended to position New York as a center of the global economy.

This was an era of grand gestures. The extraordinary thing about Government Center is that it was entirely normal.

Wrestling with the Moderns

Where are they now? A half century later, many Heroic Modern projects are now facing or have recently undergone major reconstruction, most of it hotly contested. The words



Dallas City Hall. Architect: Pei Cobb Freed & Partners. 1966–1977.

once used to describe urban areas — "slum," "blight," "clearance" — have fallen out of favor. In the '60s, there was no vocabulary for renovation at a civic scale. The question is, do we really have a vocabulary for that today?

Newspapers now write of the obsolescence of these mid-century structures in terms similar to those used to describe districts like Scollay Square and the West End in the '50s and '60s. It's out of style? Condition not quite up to snuff? Let's tear it down! To that end, it's understandable why preservationists, like those rallying to protect New York's Two Columbus Circle and Lincoln Center, resist any and all change.

"Preservationists Criticize Plans to Change Lincoln Center," announced *The New York Times* on January 22, 2005. Well, of course they do. This is the role of preservationists, is it not? Can you blame them?

The proposed plans involve changes to Lincoln Center's North Plaza: reconfiguring the reflecting pool, repositioning Henry Moore's sculpture, and replacing the travertine planters with trees and free-standing chairs.

"There seems to be no compelling justification for altering this historic and significant landscape design," argued landscape architect Ken Smith in the same *Times* article. The plaza, originally designed by Dan Kiley, "stands alongside [the work] of architects Eero Saarinen, Philip Johnson, Wallace Harrison, and Max Abramowitz as an integral part of the Lincoln Center campus."

So?

The problem is not that these preservationists are questioning today's designers. They *should* question today's designers. But what are they questioning, and to what end?

Is the Lincoln Center campus an isolated work of art on a pedestal, or is it a collection of public spaces with real uses in a constantly evolving city? The New York City of 2005 is not that of 1965 — thankfully. Architecture and landscape architecture, for better or for worse, are messy, living, breathing arts, for real people in changing times.

Unfortunately, recent published "debates" about the fate of mid-century Modernism still speak in absolutes. Either the thing gets demolished (too expensive to renovate, doesn't fit current needs, it's ugly) or it's left untouched. We think nothing now of adapting old mill buildings or brownstones. It's time to bring that same spirit to Heroic Modernism.

Of course, complaining about City Hall Plaza ranks up there with "the Curse" and the inevitable fate of the Red Sox in October for Top Ten Small Talk Topics amongst Bostonians. But the Red Sox have won the World Series. Could it actually be time to renovate City Hall Plaza?

A Plea for Tinkering

It's time for us to collectively get over it. The city will not end nor be overrun by corporate interests if — somehow — some use (like a hotel) is added to this area so that there are bodies around the Plaza after 5 PM. The plaza in Siena, Italy — after which this one is so famously modeled — is indeed surrounded by private restaurants, shops, and even rooms for rent.

The sculptural beauty (admittedly lost on many) of Boston City Hall itself will not disappear if we start to cut windows (imagine that!) into the three stories of solid brick at the building's base. Congress Street today is far more attractive than it was in 1960. Let's modify our most important civic structure for the city of today. The sidewalk is not a place to hide from; the sidewalk is where city life happens.

It All Comes Back to Jane

In each of these Heroic Modern projects is the Bauhaus spirit of reinvention and starting anew, born in Europe out of the literal destruction of World War I. The attempt to reinvent, clean, revitalize, renew had its mid-century American champions — Moses, Logue, Gruen, Doxiadis — all household names in their time.

But by the time of the Boston City Hall competition, the winds of change were already starting to blow. Jane Jacobs published *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* in 1961. In words that are still fresh and still relevant, she wrote, "To approach a city or even a city neighborhood as if it were capable of being given order by converting it into a disciplined work of art is to make the mistake of substituting art for life. The results of such profound confusion between art and life are neither life nor art. They are taxidermy. In its place, taxidermy can be a useful and decent craft. However, it goes too far when the specimens ... are exhibitions of dead, stuffed cities."

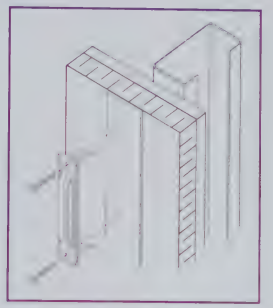
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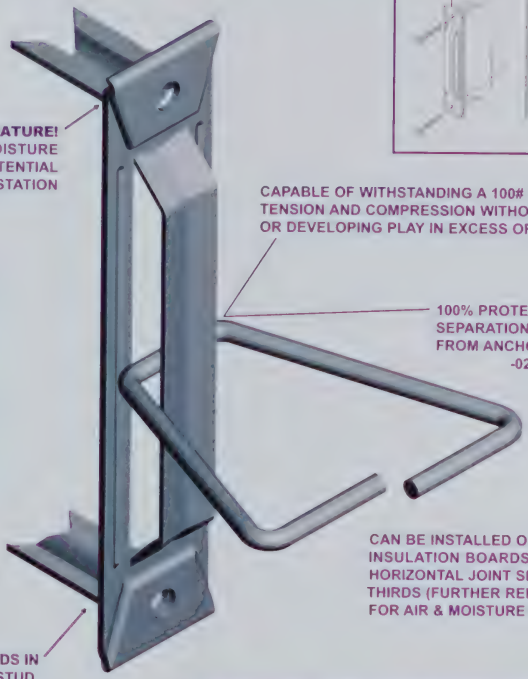
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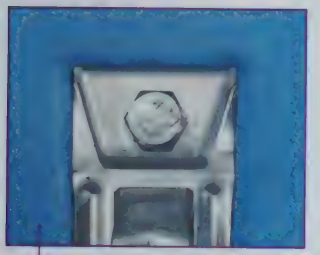




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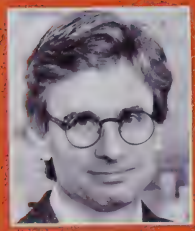
Inside



Ted Landsmark, Assoc. AIA, president of the Boston Architectural Center, was director of the Office of Community Partnerships, director of the Safe Neighborhood Program, and director of the Office of Jobs and Community Services, in the office of the mayor, city of Boston, from 1988 to 1997.



Ellen Lipsey is the executive director of the Boston Landmarks Commission. Prior to that, she was a senior planner for historic parks for the Boston Parks Department. She has worked in and around Boston City Hall since 1980.



Jeff Stein AIA is the architecture critic for *Banker & Tradesman* and the director of the architecture program at the Boston Architectural Center.



Carlton Wilkie was a policy adviser to Boston Mayor Thomas Menino from 1997 to 2000. He was a speechwriter for President Bill Clinton and is co-author of *Changing Places: Rebuilding Community in the Age of Sprawl*.

Ted Landsmark

Jeff Stein: So, for 10 years, you approached City Hall from across the Plaza on a daily basis?

Ted Landsmark: Usually. I always found that full frontal view to be rather intimidating. The dental-like nature of the front façade makes you feel as though you're stepping into the maw of some devouring beast from which you might never emerge alive.

Jeff Stein: When you were going to it, did it make you feel a certain pride that you were a public official? Or was there a sense of dread at having to enter this building every morning?

Ted Landsmark: When you enter the building, there is a giant cathedral-like space that was apparently originally intended to be full of plants and other softening elements. But you leave a hard-edged plaza and enter a hard-edged shark's mouth, and if the receptionists at the entry are not particularly welcoming, there is no way of knowing where you need to go. For people who work in the building, who experience that sense of isolation all the time, there is a feeling of anonymity. The distinctions between one office and another were minimal.

Jeff Stein: Did you have a favorite among your offices there?

Ted Landsmark: It was a delight to work 50 feet from the mayor, not only because it provided easy access to him and to other senior staff, but also because it provided the opportunity to see exactly who was coming and going. That always gave a clear sense of what was high on the agenda at any point in time.

Jeff Stein: How about the office itself that you were in? Was it comfortable? Did the materials give it a special sense of formality?

Ted Landsmark: The concrete made every office rather cold and businesslike. None of us loved our offices because they made us comfortable. The views were excellent for anyone who had an outside tier office, but you couldn't hang anything on the walls.

What's it like to work at City Hall? Jeff Stein AIA talks to three insiders who have been there, done that.

Story

The floors were hard and cold. The acoustics were not good. And there were very few communal spaces where you could gather with other workers and have quiet, informal conversations. The effort to have cafés within the building was by and large a failure because the seating areas were inadequate.

Jeff Stein: And that never evolved over the life of the building?

Ted Landsmark: The building resists all efforts to humanize it. I know that every administration has, at various times, tried to humanize both the Plaza and the interior of the building. And all have failed, because of the inflexibility of the interior space and the inability to easily integrate softening textures, fabrics, art, appropriately scaled furniture —

Jeff Stein: Or natural light.

Ted Landsmark: Or natural light if you don't have an exterior office. These have all made it very difficult to eliminate the sense that you're in a building where you only know which floor you're on by looking at the signage, and you can only find specific offices by walking round and round in a circle until eventually you find the door with the right sign on it. It's a building that leads to a real sense of anonymity among people who work there.

Jeff Stein: Yet, there it is.

Ted Landsmark: I do think that a serious effort combined with the resources to fully humanize the interior of the building would have more of an effect on the exterior than have the efforts of previous administrations to address the Plaza. If the interior were more humanized, then the very soul of the building would spread out onto the Plaza in a way that would also humanize the Plaza. But the efforts up to now all seem to have focused on making the Plaza a human place with positive effects flowing into the building. I think that's the wrong approach. The people within the building have to love it, and I think you'll find very few people who do.

Ellen Lipsey

Jeff Stein: City Hall is itself a landmark, isn't it?

Ellen Lipsey: Yes. It is a landmark visually, and in terms of international architecture. The Landmarks Commission doesn't just look at the architecture of the past; we're also thinking about future landmarks, and we certainly consider Boston City Hall to be one.

Jeff Stein: Do the commissioners meet in a room in City Hall?

Ellen Lipsey: They meet in the BRA boardroom on the ninth floor twice a month.

Jeff Stein: How well does that work? Do new commissioners know how to get to the boardroom?

Ellen Lipsey: That's always an issue, as you're probably aware. The most challenging feature of City Hall for people who aren't familiar with it is that the Plaza is on the third floor. Visitors very often get on the elevator at three and press two, assuming they're on one. And when they miss two, then usually somebody who works in the building says, "You are on three."

Jeff Stein: You have worked in offices throughout City Hall. Is the one that you're in right now terrific?

Ellen Lipsey: Definitely. I'm on the eighth floor and have a view of several landmarks: the Custom House Tower, Faneuil Hall, Quincy Market, the Blackstone block, and the waterfront. It's spectacular. And our two conference rooms also have that view.

Jeff Stein: Do members of the public interact with the Commission?

Ellen Lipsey: Yes, all of our meetings are open to the public, and they do manage to get there. We give instructions letting

people know they need to enter after 5:30 on the first floor of the building.

The interesting thing about the building's location is, that if you think of Boston as a hub, City Hall is really at the center. Some of the surrounding streets, like Congress and Devonshire and Washington, radiate out, like slices of a pie. The site connects to the North End, Beacon Hill, the waterfront, the Common, the Theater District, the Financial District. It is really in the center, and that is a very important part of its presentation.

Jeff Stein: When you first started working at City Hall, did you think to yourself, "Oh boy, I get to go into this building on a daily basis"?

Ellen Lipsey: Certainly, because I had read in architecture and preservation classes about the building and its role, and the fact that it was known internationally. And it fits into the tradition of grand civic architecture, although it's not traditional. I think it is particularly important now, because Boston has become known, in a pejorative sense, for red-brick contemporary buildings, and for being timid and very conservative about architecture.

Jeff Stein: Do you think that part of our timidity is a result of this building? Because once it was built, people said, "Wait a minute. Is this what happens with new architecture? Maybe we should look to the past a little more carefully." Still, in the last five or six years, we're getting some of our bravery back in this city and making some buildings that aren't traditional or even neo-traditional, but really breathtaking.

Ellen Lipsey: Which I think is good. One important thing we have learned from City Hall is that, if you do have an area that is basically a blank slate, like the South Boston waterfront, then that's the place to make such a bold statement. Boston, for better or worse, is a place that values tradition, preservation, and context. I think some of the friction occurs in the neighborhoods where people don't feel that architecture that's really forward-looking and brave is correctly sited.

Carter Wilkie

Jeff Stein: When you would head for work, and the building started to loom large, did you think, "I'm so glad I'm going to City Hall again today"?

Carter Wilkie: No. I have to say that Boston City Hall is probably the most cheerless building I've ever worked in, in my career.

Jeff Stein: Do you feel that way about both the outside and the inside?

Carter Wilkie: I've always felt that the people who admired the building as a piece of sculpture from the outside never appreciated the bleakness of working inside day after day after day.

Jeff Stein: Did you have an office with an outside window?

Carter Wilkie: I didn't. I was on the fifth floor, wedged between what they call the bronze hallway and the mayor's office. I had one of just a handful of offices in that building that had two means of egress — I had a door on either side, but no view.

Jeff Stein: What made you so uncomfortable in this building for extended periods?

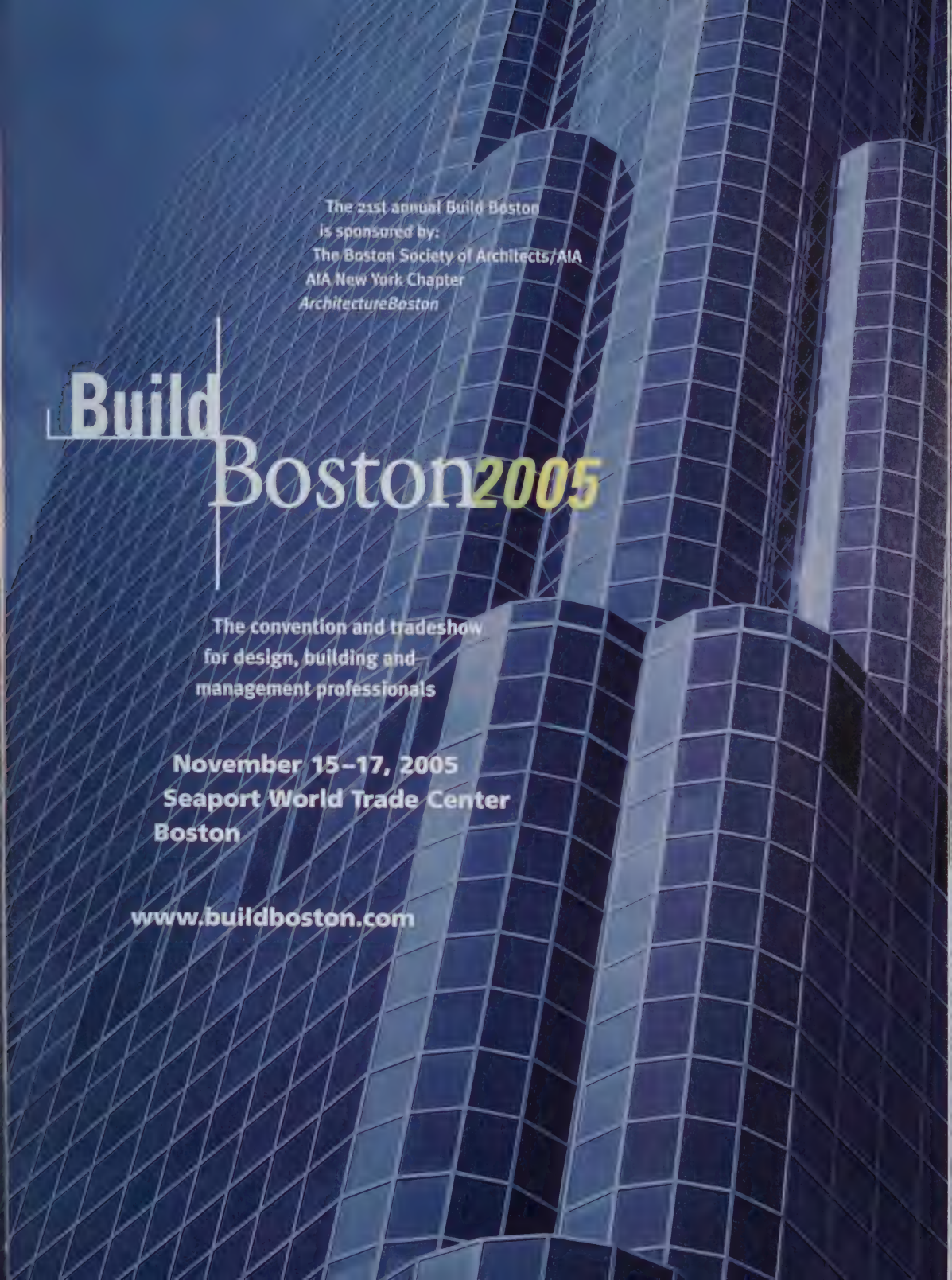
Carter Wilkie: All of the dark, gloomy, bleak concrete, wall after wall of it, is oppressive as you walk through. And the lighting is so poor. In those spaces where there aren't windows to the outside, it's very bleak. Even the spaces that should be monumental in a public building are a real disappointment. For instance, if you come in on the third floor level from City Hall Plaza, where the Government Center T stop is, you come through the doors and are drawn to those monumental steps; but they lead to absolutely nothing. And at the top of the steps there are doors to a courtyard that, for whatever reason, is never used. Steps to nowhere. You stand there in the third floor lobby of the building in the winter time, shivering, and you realize that the heat is going nine stories up, an incredible waste.

Jeff Stein: As I understand it, City Hall's architects were chosen in part because they weren't Bostonians, and they would be bringing an entirely new way of looking at the "new Boston" to the city.

Carter Wilkie: It was new but, unfortunately, 40 years later, City Hall hasn't passed the test of time. As one who worked in it for three-and-a-half years, I can tell you I'm proud of the work I did for the city, proud of my service to the mayor, but I don't miss working there for a moment.

Jeff Stein: Any other thoughts about the building you'd like to share?

Carter Wilkie: The acoustics of City Hall always struck me as terrible for a space designed for public ceremonies. Even in the small public hearing rooms, you have to strain to hear what is being said, and the echo effect in the lobbies makes it nearly impossible for the ear to focus on any particular sound. But I do remember one exception: one afternoon, a group of older veterans from Finland, who were touring the Freedom Trail, stopped in and gave an impromptu performance of two traditional folk songs on the steps of the third floor lobby. The sound filled the entire building, bringing people out of their offices to listen and cheer when it was over, as quickly as it started.


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Covering the Issues

Master puppeteer... An article about a film of an opera about a book about a building? But of course! And of course, this could only be about the Carpenter Center. In 1958, Harvard University commissioned Le Corbusier to design its studio-arts building, the only North American commission this Modern master ever received. In 1978, architectural historian (and the building's director) Eduard Sekler wrote a book detailing the Carpenter Center's construction. In 2002, French artist Pierre Huyghe began to create "a new work of art for the university" — a 20-minute puppet opera, which he filmed, detailing the saga of its construction. It's a tale of inspired vision and creation, authorship, and interpretation. If you missed the movie (or the opera), Mariana Mogilevich describes it all in "(Re)birth of a Building" in the February/March *Art New England*.

"I pahked the cah..." and then started walking. Great news for Boston's legendary drivers. Make that great news for Boston's pedestrians. According to the *Atlantic Monthly*'s March issue (see "Road Kill"), Boston is the safest metropolitan area in the country for those who walk around. The most dangerous? Sprawling car-only places like Orlando lead the list. Urban planners take note: compact, walkable cities are good for one's health — and life.

Wait! Where's Boston City Hall?... What do the University of Virginia, Oak Alley Plantation, the Rookery, the Gamble House, the Robie House, First Church of Christ Scientist, the Schindler House, the Lovell Health House, PSFS, the Gropius House, Fallingwater, the Eames House, the Farnsworth House, the Lever House, Eden Roc Hotel, Case Study House #22, the TWA Terminal at JFK Airport, the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, the Salk Institute, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Douglas House, Thorncrown Chapel, the Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts, Disney Concert Hall, and the Seattle Public Library have in common? They're the "25 Buildings Every Man Should Know," according to Brad Dunning in *GQ* (March 2005).

The right stuff... Before Section 8 vouchers, before Cabrini-Green, before the Great Depression, the reaction to public-housing design was positive. Or so argues Daniel Brook, in "Unnecessary Excellence," in *Harper's* (March 2005). Through site plans, photos, and extensive captions, Brook discusses why Yorkship Village, in Camden, New Jersey, was particularly excellent when built in 1918, and why it is still strong today. In so doing, he gives a mini-history of 20th-century public housing strategy. He challenges designers to learn from our past, and public housing officials to "deem that such excellence is necessary."

Contested ground... The first round of books about rebuilding Ground Zero is out. In the February 24 *New York Review of Books*, Martin Filler discusses the top four. Along the way, Filler provides a concise, clear account of the people and politics that are actually shaping the reconstruction of the World Trade Center. What might have been American architecture's greatest moment is, well, not.

Word play... Design will save the world! Design will destroy the world! A pair of recent articles proves yet again how over-used and misunderstood the term



"design" is. On the anti-design side, January/March *Carbusters* includes an interview with "reformed architect" Jean Robert and "independent scholar" Sajay Samuel on "The Danger of Designed Spaces," featuring lines like "the disproportion of designed spaces compresses, edges out, and withers [away] the places for dwelling." Huh? On the pro-design side, Lynn Coady reviews the "Massive Change" exhibit in *Adbusters #58*, which offers the perhaps overly optimistic message that design will create a better world. ■

Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA, teaches the architecture studios at Smith College.

Books Books Books



PRECEDENTS IN ARCHITECTURE: ANALYTIC DIAGRAMS, FORMATIVE IDEAS, AND PARTIS
by Roger Clark and Michael Pause
John Wiley, 2004 (3rd edition)

Precedents in Architecture analyzes 104 buildings by 31 architects, ranging from Hawksmoor to Holl. The premise is highly formal, intended to demonstrate patterns, themes, and "archetypical ideas" that bridge styles and eras. Such an analysis is intended to "assist the understanding of architectural history, to examine basic similarities of … designs over time, to identify generic solutions to design problems … and to develop analysis as a tool for design." The book is formatted in two sections. The first, "analysis," treats buildings individually, presenting plans, sections, and elevations on one page and, on the facing page, a series of analytical diagrams (structure, natural light, massing, plan to section, unit to whole, additive and subtractive, repetitive to unique, symmetry and balance, hierarchy, geometry, and parti). The second section, "formative ideas," groups these building by themes (plan to section, unit to whole, repetitive to unique, additive and subtractive, symmetry and balance, geometry, configuration patterns, progressions, reduction).

There are two ways to review this text. First, practically. The drawings are quite small and difficult to read. The building documentation is adequate; however, the book would be substantially richer and more useful if the drawings were larger, with more supporting information. Going beyond the diagram to a larger understanding of the building is difficult without the broader context of additional information.

Second, on content. As an instructor of architecture students, I have encountered the challenge of teaching diagramming, and have tried to use previous editions of this book to help teach the concept. However, it hasn't been as useful as other texts (Ching's *Form, Space and Order* or Tufte's *Visual Display of Quantitative Information*) because it doesn't have enough explanation. *Precedents* may hold some interest for established architects who have knowledge of the illustrated buildings and can read (the minuscule) plans. But while it doesn't have enough explanation for students, it also doesn't provide enough detail for the established professional.

The authors apply the same categories to all buildings, and while the rigor of the uniform technique has strengths, some diagrams seem, if not arbitrary, at least forced. The rigor also gives rise to limitations — one wonders why a silhouette drawing rather than an axonometric conveys "massing."

Although there is much information to be gleaned from this book, the overtly formal approach leaves out a great deal that explains the richness of any building. It would be a far stronger book — for practicing professionals, for educators, and for students — if it focused on the most relevant issues of each building, investigating them in more depth and with more documentation (including photographs) to explain just how rich and interesting the buildings actually are.



COMPETING GLOBALLY IN ARCHITECTURE COMPETITIONS
by G. Stanley Collyer
Academy Press, 2004

Architects are weaned on the charrette process, where intensive work in relative isolation under considerable time pressure yields an abundance of creative energy — even if it is not always well directed. They then often spend much of their careers reconciling the business demands of the profession with the almost religious fervor learned in school. It therefore seems inevitable that competitions have come to occupy a significant, if somewhat uncomfortable, position in the profession. Unfortunately, *Competing Globally* sheds little light and even less heat on this situation.

As part of a series entitled "Architecture in Practice," the book claims that its intended audience is "any architect or student who is intent on growing or establishing their practice." Yet it fails to place competitions in the context of architectural practice as a whole. A remarkably small number of practices (or a small number of remarkable practices, depending on how you look at it) engages in competitions successfully. Presenting the book as "a shortcut to success for the design professional" is at best naïve.

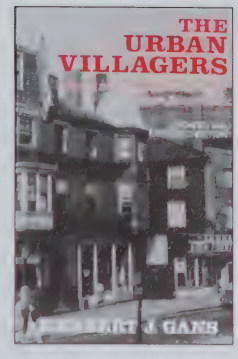
Collyer, who is the editor of *Competitions* magazine, begins the book with a 15-page treatise entitled "Why Compete?" which attempts to convey his acquired wisdom on the history, management, and rationale of competitions, as well as strategies for competition presentations. Although it rambles and switches from second- to third-person narrative, as if uncertain of its audience, whatever insight the book has is offered in this introductory section.

The book is then divided into six chapters by building type: government buildings, performing-arts centers, education facilities, public libraries, museums, and housing. Each section includes three to six case studies, dryly described by a variety of contributors. Only a few offer the point of view of the jury, and none is written by the designer; little synergy is gained by this structure.

An interesting appendix of "Competitions by Country" includes a brief overview of the competition climate in a dozen countries around the globe; it includes contributions by competition entrants and offers some opportunity for comparative insights, even if a "grass is always greener" sentiment pervades.

Competitions at their best demand an energy and intensity of design thinking that stimulates some of the best work by some firms, and arguably some of the best work by the profession as a whole. Competitions also inevitably involve sleep deprivation, bad takeout food, worse tempers, and apologies to spouses and significant others. Collyer ironically (but correctly) notes that firms sometimes enter a competition to improve morale in the office.

In the chasm between the passionate in-depth pursuit of design and the objective management of architecture as a profession, this book rests firmly on side of objectivity — and it does so at the expense of being bloodless.



THE URBAN VILLAGERS

Just as the Citgo sign stands as an icon of Kenmore Square, so the billboard proclaiming "If You Lived Here You'd Be Home Now" is a landmark for Charles River Park and its apartment towers on Storrow Drive. The irony is





that a significant number of (now aging) commuters once did live there and have been without a sense of home for some time. For Charles River Park stands on the site of Boston's old West End, a neighborhood of narrow streets, tenements, and row houses that was declared a slum in 1953 and was entirely demolished between 1958 and 1960.

The original inhabitants were removed to public housing in other parts of the city or otherwise left to their own devices; in 1962, the first residents of the new luxury apartment complex began to move in. Herbert Gans, at the time a sociologist at the University of Pennsylvania, lived in the West End from 1957–58, just before the "clearances," recording for posterity not only the anthropology of the predominantly working-class Italian community that lived there, but also the process of the forcible resettlement of 2,700 households.

The story of the West End is not simply that of an urban clearance. It is also an example of federal funding for private development and thus a particularly aggressive form of government-assisted gentrification. The bureaucrats' diagnosis was that the West End was a "slum." The prescription was to wipe the slate clean, clear out the poor people and substandard buildings, and replace them with rich people and high-rise towers.

Gans makes two major points, both of which still bear some examination today. The first is that when cheaper housing units are lost to more expensive ones, the cheaper end of the scale is lost forever, and a stratum of city residents loses its rung on the ladder. The second is in his discussion of the word "slum," which he asserts "is an evaluative, not an analytic concept." The view embraced by housing officials, politicians, and the editorial writers of *The Boston Globe* was that high-density, close-quarter living in old brick buildings amounted to slum-dwelling. Gans points out that, for the most part, the physical environment, while not matching up to middle-class standards, could not be considered actually harmful to residents, and the residents themselves, not matching up to middle-class standards, were on the whole not harmful to each other.

There are three good reasons to read this book. First, it is a fascinating ethnographic account of an immigrant working-class community. Second, it is a chilling analysis of class-planning. And third, it is a reminder to planners and architects that we once read books like this to inform ourselves.

[redacted] is an architect and planner in Cambridge, Massachusetts.







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www.mesopotamia.co.uk/ziggurats
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BRA
www.cityofboston.gov/bra
The Boston Redevelopment Authority hosts an extensive website, including projects, planning initiatives, and reports. Click on "maps/aerial photos" for access to "The Boston Atlas."

BRA
www.burlesquerevival.org
No, not *that* BRA. The Burlesque Revival Association produces classic variety shows — comedy, magic, puppets, dance, music, drag, and strip-tease acts. If you've shed a tear for the loss of old Scollay Square, check them out. You'll feel much better.

EYESORE OF THE MONTH
www.kunstler.com/eyesore.html
He's baaack. Actually, he never went anywhere. James Howard Kunstler, the author of *The Geography of Nowhere*, would be happy to share a few thoughts with you.

THE SOCIAL LIFE OF CITIES
www.yale.edu/socdept/slc
Online slide lectures for lapsed Yalies or anyone with a curiosity about urban culture. Click on "Urban Renewal in Boston" for the story of the West End "slum" clearance.

THE SPACE ODYSSEY EXPLAINED
www.kubrick2001.com
Wondering why so many Bostonians embraced the "alien" form of their new city hall? It was 1968, and they'd all just seen *2001: A Space Odyssey*. (The Hancock tower was still to come.)

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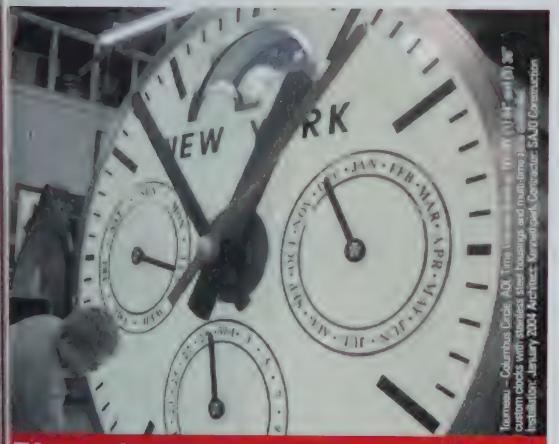
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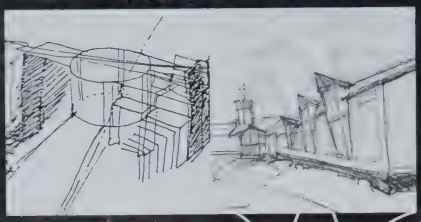


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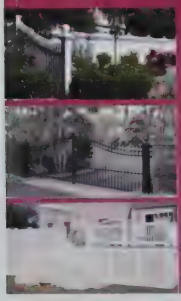
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BY DOUGLAS P. WOODLOCK

The Ipswich Town Hall



The Ipswich Town Hall was moved four years ago from South Main Street to what was once the location of the Essex County House of Correction and Insane Asylum. I use the passive verb intentionally to describe the act. The move to a less prominent site was not the result of a planning initiative. Nor was it intended, despite the location's past history, as an ironic form of political comment. The new location was simply what was available after the middle school was incorporated in the new high school, leaving a public property large enough to accommodate the needs of modern town government.

Despite its benign intentions, the move was, nevertheless, an indirect reflection of the lack of pride of place now accorded the central institutions of our civic life. Those institutions increasingly are relegated to subordinate locations because they, and the structures which house them, no longer lay claim to being visibly vital aspects of community life. In cities, they are now relocated on leftover scraps from post-World War II urban renewal banquets; in towns, they are moved to public properties whose prior uses have been exhausted or abandoned. The shells left behind when these civic institutions move on are then inhabited by the commercial zeitgeist of a new post-civic age.

Things didn't start out that way. When Ipswich was laid out in the 1630s, the first public building in town, a meeting house for the theocratic government, was placed in the central location on North Main Street known as the Meeting House Green. In 1704, a separate town house was constructed nearby, and 90 years later municipal functions were incorporated in a new courthouse on the green.

When town government moved from Meeting House Green in the 1840s, its relocation was to another prominent site near the *other* town green. The new home, which came to be called Town Hall, was a former church building purchased from a short-lived Unitarian congregation and it proclaimed itself civic in form and function, both of which were underscored with the later addition of courthouse functions.

There is no denying that in its final stages the old Town Hall desperately needed thoughtful restoration. But the building's structure and location enabled residents of and visitors to Ipswich to know precisely where town government was when they drove by on Route 1A, aka South Main Street. Even after the Town Hall left for the former middle school, there was hope that significant civic activity would remain in the old building as the result of a planned renovation to accommodate the District Court. But in 2004, the Ipswich sessions were moved to the Newburyport courthouse.

In the wake of that move, the town developed a request for proposals for the now empty structure. The apparent winner, announced last January, is an entertainment company that plans renovations to accommodate a theater, bookstore, and coffee house.

It is tempting to see this impending reincarnation as nothing more than a modern continuation of the adaptive-reuse response that transformed a Unitarian Church building into a Town Hall over a century-and-a-half ago. But something fundamental will be missing this time around, some evidence of the soul of the building as a civic structure functioning as the locus of the formative activities of town democracy and legible to residents and passersby because of its central location.

The form will remain; it will even be restored. The plans sound intriguing and historically sensitive. And a pleasant community amenity will be provided. But the claims of a civic life will no longer be made in a place of prominence. The Town Hall is now tucked away on a side street over by the river, and the courts have moved out of town altogether. Thus, the relative priority of civic institutions in our time becomes evident. There is no longer room for a civic building on the town's principal artery. The highest and best use for Main Street as we begin the 21st century is casual recreation and caffeine consumption. ■

Douglas P. Woodlock is a US District Court Judge for the District of Massachusetts. He received the 1996 AIA Thomas Jefferson Award for Public Architecture for his work supporting design excellence in civic buildings.



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Roadside cabins, Cape Cod, 1959

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Cover: Detail, glass "Megaplanet," © 2001 by Josh Simpson. Photo: Tommy Olof Elder.

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Our Place in the World

In the early 1990s, futurist Faith Popcorn predicted that the trend most likely to influence American lifestyles over the coming decade would be "cocooning." We would cope with the stress of our everyday lives by finding ways to withdraw from the world: we would stay at home more, devote our resources to making our homes more comfortable, and occasionally invite close friends to share our cozy retreats. Marketing people took notice and therefore proved her partially correct. People once talked about improving their characters; today they improve their kitchens.

The problem, of course, is that most of us can't really choose to withdraw from the world — it demands our attention with increasing insistence. What happens elsewhere — in other parts of the globe, in Washington, DC, in the next town or neighborhood — affects almost every aspect of our lives.

It wasn't always this way. Communities — even entire societies — were once far more self-sufficient; news from away was in itself news. Globalization is an accepted part of our lives today, but our understanding of its implications is still nascent. Globalization is shorthand for a political, economic, and social process. "Elsewhere" — the theme of this issue of *ArchitectureBoston* — suggests an entirely different concept: it refers to a relationship between people and place. It is not hard to imagine that elsewhere would mean different things — if indeed it would have meaning at all — to pre-European Native Americans; Augustus Caesar during the Pax Romana; Bedouin nomads; Qin Shi Huangdi, China's first emperor; 16th-century seafaring explorers; the pioneers of the Northern Plains; Neil Armstrong. Following the December 26 tsunami, the world was astonished that members of the isolated Jarawa tribe managed to survive, but was perhaps even more astonished by their complete rejection of reporters and aid workers. "My world is in the forest," one member said to an AP reporter. "Your world is outside. We don't like people from outside."

There is evidence that our own definition of elsewhere is changing. The environmental movement in the late 20th century has taught us to understand the interconnectedness of systems. Multiculturalism has taught us to challenge preconceptions of "the other." Technology and cheap transportation have given us easy access to faraway people and places. Nothing is exotic when all is familiar. Perhaps, then, it is not much of a leap to look for the attributes of elsewhere in the familiar: family vacations within a day's drive; the strange worlds of Hogwarts School and Middle Earth at the local movie theater; mythic places in video games on home computers.

There is evidence that our definition of elsewhere is changing. Nothing is exotic when all is familiar.

A changed understanding of elsewhere is a profound cultural shift. Because architecture reflects the culture that builds it, we will see changes in what we build and why; the following pages suggest ways in which that is already occurring. But we also need to explore more deeply what this changing definition means. Perhaps most significantly, elsewhere seems to have become less a place and more a need. We increasingly crave the restorative function associated with traveling elsewhere.

A discussion of elsewhere quickly becomes a discussion of identity: we tend to define elsewhere as the counterpoint to ourselves and our own condition. In our September/October issue, *ArchitectureBoston* will examine identity. We hope that these two issues together will offer our readers a fresh understanding of how we might design our place in the world. ■

Elizabeth S. Padjen FAIA
Editor

Mediterranea, the newest kitchen in the Arclinea Collection, now on display at Arclinea Boston



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Many thanks for your splendid issue on Boston City Hall [May/June 2005]. I was particularly gratified to see the references to Jim Lawrence's leadership in making that project happen. It was not until the evening when Gerhard Kallmann and Michael McKinnell were awarded the BSA Award of Honor (Jim Lawrence was one of the first recipients of that same award) that I learned of Jim's involvement. In accepting the award, Michael said that, had it not been for Jim Lawrence, they would not be standing there that night. I asked him afterwards what he meant, and he told me that it was Jim who had organized the competition. I phoned Jim the next day to pass along Michael's comment, and was met with his usual reticence to take credit.

Jim was a man of exceptional intellect and exquisite grace who struggled mightily in the last years of his life on behalf of improving the condition of City Hall. Unfortunately, without the political, civic, and business support that embraced the initial project, progress to date has been all but non-existent. My own enthusiasm for this building has never waned, and I hope that somehow the appropriate attention and financial commitment can be focused on its rejuvenation. It would be a proper tribute to one of Boston's most distinguished citizens, James Lawrence FAIA.

James Hudson Crissman FAIA
Watertown, Massachusetts

Looking at the photographs of Boston City Hall by Steve Rosenthal and Cervin Robinson ["The New Order," May/June 2005] fills me with memories. In 1969, the Committee for the Better Use of Air — a small collection of people connected to the Graduate School of Design at Harvard — was enthusiastically supported by Parks Commissioner John Warner in its plans for a Great Boston Bite Festival. And we were supported in our idea to hang a collection of Charles Eames Indian fighting kites in the gray lobby of City Hall — many brightly colored diamonds moving in the breeze of the doors.

A year later, when I was working for the Institute of Contemporary Art, Mayor Kevin White and Commissioner of Cultural Affairs Kathy Kane invited the ICA to hold exhibitions in the fifth floor Gallery (now the City Council Chambers). We considered ourselves artists in residence and even threw a fund-raising dance in the lobby. That September, Bill Wainwright and I got married in the office of the Justice of the Peace.

In the middle years of First Night, we held a number of wonderful events on the Plaza; my favorite was The Oracle and the Man from City Hall. Bill Wainwright created a silver oracular bird head, and sculptor Mags Harries used the windows of the City Council Chambers for the eyes of the Man from City Hall, adding a bowler hat and a great jaw. Outside, the audience asked questions from the top of an airport moveable stair; inside, the voices of the Oracle and the High Priestess coped with the Man from City Hall in an attempt to reach their audience.

Boston City Hall holds some of my most beloved memories. And next April, I will be involved in the Faith Quilts Project exhibitions, one of which will be in City Hall.

Clara Wainwright
Brookline, Massachusetts

Having a rather long perspective, from when a new Boston City Hall was my thesis project at the Harvard GSD in 1951, to when I saw from my office window Mayor John Collins occupy his new, not-quite-finished office in 1967, I can add a few comments on why City Hall was sited there and why the Plaza became what it is.

Well before 1960, it was clear that Boston needed a new city hall. Though the city had been stagnant, the Old City Hall on School Street, even with the larger office Annex on Court Street, was not enough for city business. The questions were when, where, and what.

With the Back Bay being revived and the John Hancock Tower being planned, the General Services Administration wanted the Copley Square area for its new Federal Office Building. A strong business community, under the leadership of the Vault, had brought in Ed Logue to head the renewal effort, and an active Chamber of Commerce wanted to bring back the Downtown and put together special teams to plan for the Waterfront and a new Government Center.

They promised the GSA a grand setting for their new Federal Building. The GSA was persuaded. Then, of course, a new City Hall had to have its own presence on the grand new Plaza. I.M. Pei was engaged to prepare the grand plan and gave the City Hall a place where it would be prominent and hold its own in the presence of a high-rise Federal Building. That was the environment that the architect-competitors had to consider for the new City Hall.

It was and is the New Boston, and Gerhard Kallmann and Michael McKinnell did a magnificent job in making the transition. Now, if Mayor Menino would finally take a strong personal role, with city funds or direct oversight, the Plaza might overcome the difficulties that the GSA inspired.

Robert S. Sturgis FAIA
Weston, Massachusetts

Boston City Hall is a masterpiece. Each of the roughly 7,000 times I've approached the building from the Plaza, I've felt filled with pride looking at this dignified monument framing the Custom House tower on the right and the Old

North Church on the left, a gorgeous composition of government, commerce, and religion. I often continue up the brick hill inside to the dramatic vantage point where views of Faneuil Hall, Quincy Market, the financial district, the harbor, the airport, and the Atlantic Ocean reinforce the composition.

Great architecture fits the context not only of its place but also its times and its culture. Of course, City Hall and its plaza setting are monumental; they had to be to reverse 40 years of distrust of city government. And though the Plaza is criticized as being merely a crossroads, that is no disgrace. From Oedipus to Robert Johnson, folks agree that a crossroads is a most significant kind of place.

Let's re-learn how to use the Plaza, the lobby, and the courtyards. Once they were filled with activity when the fountains flowed and pushcarts sold lunch at the edges and everybody was there. No place could be more democratic, because the Plaza has no center, front, or back; any spot is the center (like the universe). Activity at the edges is good and the new arcade offers it in a beautiful and poetic way. No place in New England is better for bringing us all together. Failing to use it to celebrate the Red Sox miracle was very sad.

Today, closed passages through the building, non-functioning fountains, lost public spaces, and the intrusion of security devices compromise but don't destroy the positive effect. Boston City Hall and Plaza could use some touching-up — maintenance and programming mainly — but let's not touch too much.

Robert Kroin AIA
Boston Redevelopment Authority
Boston

Your roundtable discussion on City Hall and its plaza ["The Way We Were," May/June 2005] was much needed, but it did not address the street pattern or the neighborhood that City Hall displaced. I remember what today's Government Center used to be: it was Scollay Square, a hustling, bustling center of activity that attracted people from all over New England.

I was one of thousands of teenagers who would skip school to visit old Scollay Square, "peeking" in at the Old Howard Casino Theater to catch a glimpse of Ann Corio or some other burlesque beauty queen or comedy act. The streets, Brattle and Cornhill, flanking on either side what is now City Hall and its plaza, and Hanover Street at the other end of the Plaza against the JFK Building, led up to Cambridge Street and Scollay Square. They were all wiped out by the new Government Center. They were simply steeply sloped streets, lined with buildings, somewhat dingy but appropriately scaled, comfortably fitting into the streetscape and providing a gradual human-scaled transition from Cambridge to Congress Street.

A very foreboding, uninviting multitude of steps has replaced the sloping busy streets. One can only imagine how wonderful and exciting it could be if that same continuous matrix of streets existed today. One could leisurely meander from Faneuil Hall and Quincy Market up to City Hall Plaza, led all the way along by a variety of shops, restaurants, and bistros, only to pleasantly stumble upon a wonderful, open, airy City Hall Plaza, filled with people and activity facing the grand monumentality of "New" City Hall.

Maybe the "unstructured vitality of the city streets," as referenced by Messrs. Kallmann and McKinnell in their adjoining article ["Original Thinking"], can be reintroduced to enhance and engage City Hall, which they so valiantly created, with its deserving citizenry.

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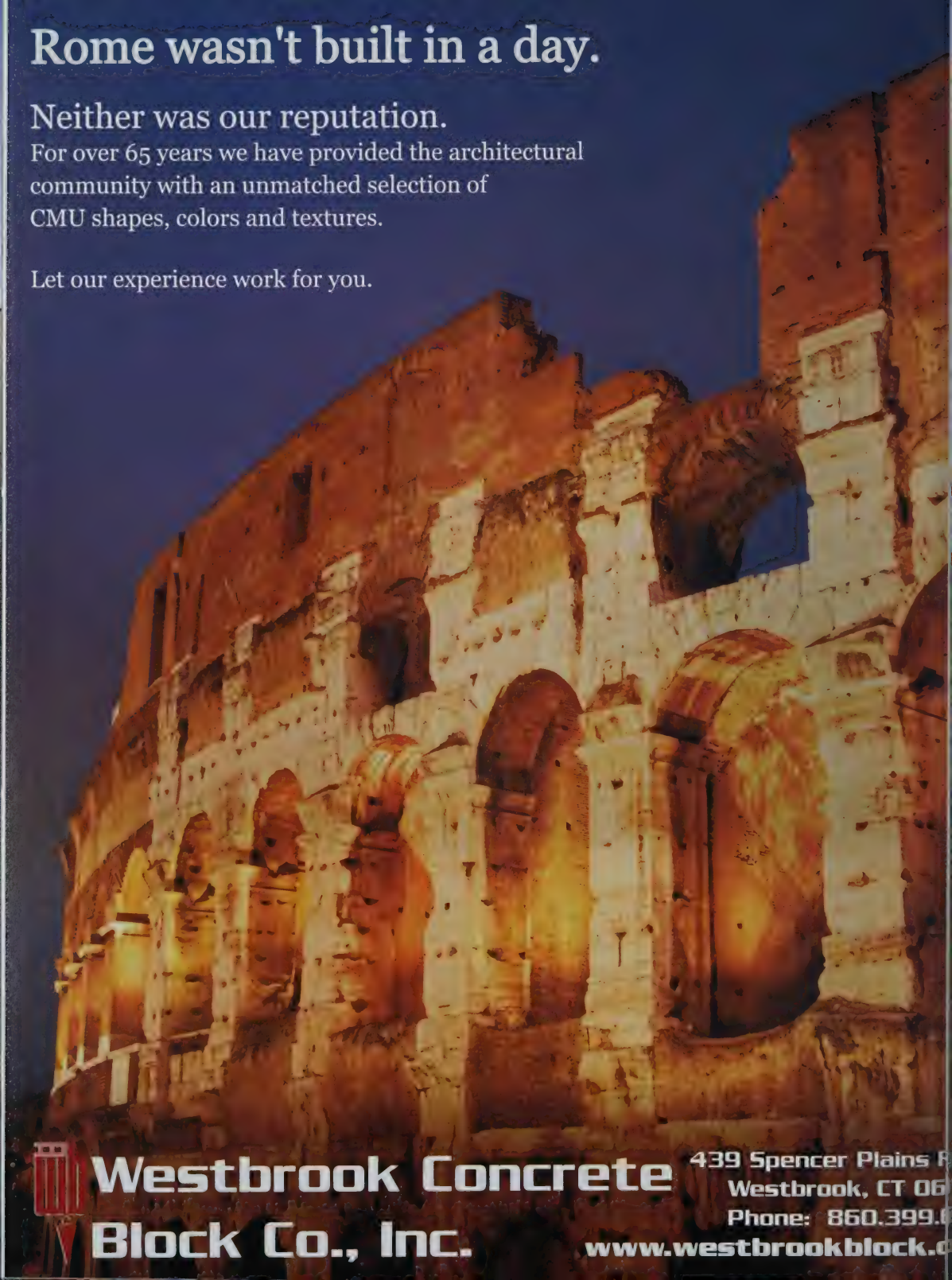
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Extreme Textiles: Designing for High Performance

Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, New York City
April 8, 2005 – January 15, 2006

Among the knitted polyester heart grafts, crystal polymer satellites, vintage muslin airplanes, self-lubricating felt cogs and carbonfiber nanotube skyscrapers at the Cooper-Hewitt's *Extreme Textiles*, the most interesting objects are made of paper. These are the dozens of cardboard rectangles throughout the rambling exhibit, imprinted with "Please Do Not Touch." Rarely has this familiar injunction been so strenuously applied and, on the evidence of a recent visit, so comprehensively ignored. Museumgoers poked, stroked, prodded, and pressed everything not behind glass; even a museum guard quietly tested the texture of a shiny bundle of nylon mountaineering cable.

Textiles are tactile. Their astonishing properties of lightness, changeability, tensile strength, and intricacy are visceral and haptic as much as visual and optic. Currently, digitally and materially inflected fabrication is supplanting acrobatic formalism as the best-pedigreed discourse in architecture. But the folding surfaces and fluid tendencies of the resulting designs have been insufficiently unfamiliar. Textiles offer a tonic to a design culture long concerned with mere visual affect. A curator confessed to *The New York Times* that the museum had omitted many significant materials that were "really boring to look at." And yet, a little high-performance visual boredom might be just what architecture needs.

One such sublimely boring object is a large beige sphere of woven silicone rubber, covered with a Braille-like grid of tiny gray feet. This minimalist artwork is NASA's prototype Tumbleweed Inflatable Rover. Blown chaotically across the surface of Mars, it deflates and presses itself against the surface of that planet when it runs across something interesting. In its profound simplicity and subjectivity to chance, it is subtle, technological, tectonic, and of course, architectural — all words with the Indo-European root *teks*, to weave. As an object lesson, the Tumbleweed is deeply and endearingly odd, and entirely touching.

Thomas de Monchaux lives in New York.

Building Heaven, Remembering Earth: Confessions of a Fallen Architect

Directed by Oliver Hockenhull (1999)
104 minutes (various venues and DVD)

Building Heaven takes us on a haphazard, grand tour of Europe with a little Asia thrown in at the end. Hockenhull has said that this film was about "the lack of meaning and coherence in the world around me." He might better have substituted the word "footage" for "world."

Despite its shortcomings, *Building Heaven* contains real gems: archival footage of Corbu extolling the virtues of Ville Radieuse; the bizarre anecdote of Albert Speer's death (from too much, ahem, lovin' no less!); the surreal visual treatment of Chicago; and Hockenhull's declaration that Mies' Modernism turned "everyplace into a dentist's waiting room."

Too bad that when Hockenhull made a film about architecture, he took on the ego of an architect to go with it. No doubt it was this that led him to drag what could have been a fantastic 30-minute short into a mediocre feature. But then, directors have a long history of ego all their own.

Coryn Kempster is an M.Arch student at MIT and a videographer.



Lecture: Jacques Herzog
Harvard Graduate School of Design

March 18, 2005

It wasn't until the end of a lecture titled "Two Stadiums, Two Museums, a Philharmonic Hall, and a Few Other Things" that Jacques Herzog was able to articulate the idea connecting the diverse projects he had presented in the previous hour. His intention, he explained carefully, is to employ "the aesthetic as a tool to create public life."

Indeed. Much of the work of the renowned Swiss firm Herzog & de Meuron includes artfully designed public spaces: the 66,000-seat Allianz Arena atop the landscaped roof of a parking garage in Munich; the 100,000-seat Olympic stadium in Beijing; the recently completed extension of the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis; the New de Young Museum in San Francisco; a proposed Philharmonic Hall crowning a former warehouse in Hamburg.

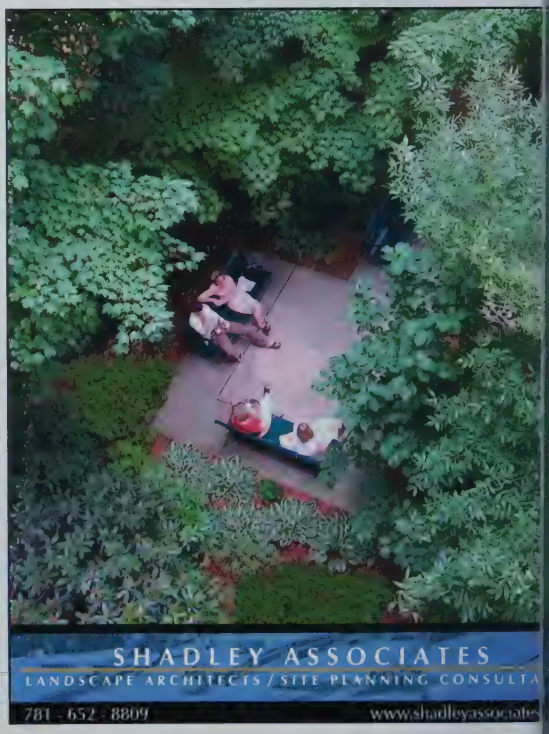
Given the scale and complexity of these current projects, it was surprising that Herzog spoke about them only to perpetuate the myth of the master architect. Where was the landscape architect so critical to the Munich stadium (it is Vogt) or the engineer of the Beijing "bird's nest" structure (it is Arup)? Why state that stadiums were "historically built by engineers and developers" and that architects (i.e., Herzog & de Meuron) have only recently become involved, given the obvious example of Munich's 1972 Olympic stadium, a collaboration of engineers and architects including Frei Otto and Gunter Behnisch?

Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron, both design critics at the GSD, were joint winners of the 2001 Pritzker Prize; their firm is known for its intellectual rigor. Buildings survive, Herzog insisted, because they are attractive. Adding something to the building's contribution to the public realm is key — even if the client is not aware of it.

For their current traveling museum exhibition (one of the projects subsumed under the "few other things" in the lecture's title), Herzog and de Meuron developed olfactory objects (perfume) as a dimension of spatial experience, an exercise predicated on the belief that architecture cannot be represented in exhibitions. One might argue that it cannot be represented in lectures, either. Herzog is an eloquent speaker; perhaps he will next similarly challenge the conventions of the slide-talk.

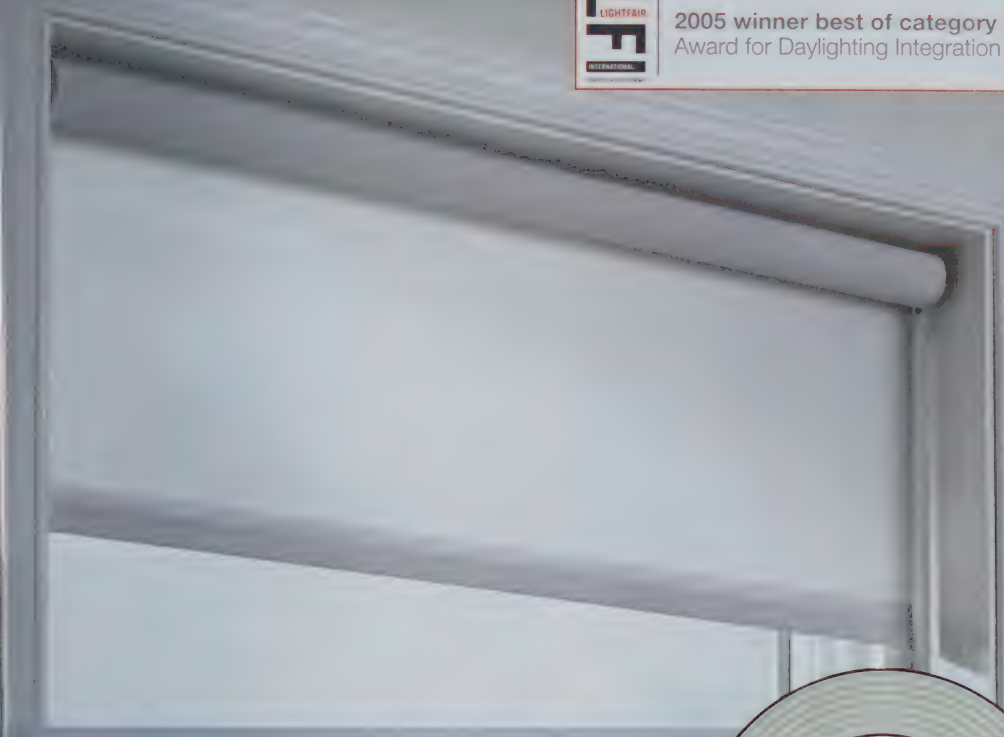
Susanne Schindler is a designer at Utile, Inc. in Boston.





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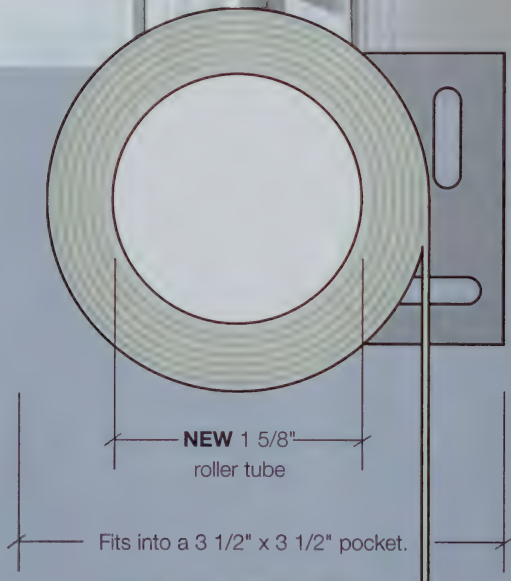
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In the MIT Glass Lab



The glass lab: In the basement of MIT's main building. On this winter morning, snow is piled high outside the windows. Inside, there's a sense of immense banked heat and light. The glass furnace, which has burned continuously at 2070° for the past three years, emits an orange glow, like a sleeping dragon.

The director: Peter Houk [center in photo], who has run the lab since 1997. Originally a painter, he became intrigued with glass as a surface on which to sandblast images, and eventually segued into glassblowing. He divides his time between architectural installations, his own pieces (recently a series of etchings of the Big Dig sandblasted onto richly colored vessels), and teaching in the glass lab.

The students: Undergraduates and graduate students. Bursting with abstract knowledge in fields like aeronautics and nuclear physics. Desperately eager to do something fun and hands-on. When the admissions lottery for this beginner's course was held, 150 students showed up to vie for 16 places. Today's class is only their second glassblowing lesson.

The day:

9:15 Peter arrives, takes a torch, and lights the glory holes, two smaller furnaces that will take about an hour to reach their working temperature of 2300°.

9:45 Readies tools for the students. Sets out trays of frit — colored glass bits ranging in texture from aquarium pebbles to granulated sugar.

9:50 Lifts a bag of broken glass from China and pours it, with a loud shattering noise, into a tall piece of stovepipe. Carries it over to the glass furnace, and dumps it in.

10:05 The four students in the day's first two-hour session gather near the furnace, wearing protective eyewear (mostly sunglasses). Peter explains that today they'll be making paperweights, their first experience incorporating color into glass. He shows them the trays of frit. "You don't want to use all these together."

One of the students asks, instantly, in quintessential MIT fashion: "Bad color choice, or bad chemical reaction?"

"Sometimes both," Peter says. "Different colors have different compositions — if lead and selenium combine, for instance, they'll turn gray."

10:12 Peter opens the window: the lab has grown noticeably hotter.

10:15 Chris, Peter's co-teacher for this class, begins a demonstration of today's project. He gathers molten glass from the furnace at the end of the pontil, a long steel rod. Comes away with a glowing Q-tip of transparent orange glass. Carries it over to the marver, the steel work table, and rolls the molten glass in the frit, which clings to the surface. Then heats it in the glory hole. The glass is the color of caramel, the shape of a hot dog. More heating and marvering. He pushes the hot glass into a conical mold; it emerges ridged. Carries it to the bench and uses the jacks — long pointed tongs — to pinch a neck, which he grasps and pulls; the glass stretches like chewing gum. He twists the long grooved strand back on itself, heats it, then snips it with scissors: now the whole thing looks like a spiny sea creature.

Back to the furnace, to coat the piece in molten glass; back to the bench, to shape it in a round wooden ladle which has been soaking in a bucket of water. The sea creature has spread and melted: a soft blooming core at the heart of a smooth glass globe. Peter is seamlessly assisting, opening and closing the furnace doors, anticipating which tools will be needed, shielding Chris's forearm from the hot glass with a wet wooden paddle. He's also teaching: "The inside temperature of the piece now is around 1500°, and the outside is at 1000°. The inside would still like to flow, but it can't because of the outside. So you flash it

once or twice more, to even out the heat differential. The annealer will take care of the rest."

10:39 Chris creates a chilled score line around the neck of the piece. Then he bonks the pontil with a small wooden club, and the paperweight falls neatly into Peter's gloved hands. Peter carries it over to the annealer, where it will cool slowly.

10:40 Peter begins another demo, a paperweight incorporating colored glass rods and a big central air bubble.

11:00 Chris catches Peter's finished piece in gloved hands. He carries it to the annealer wearing a hat, to avoid scorching his long hair. "Not that it's dangerous," he says. "I just hate the smell."

11:02 The students discuss with Peter and Chris what they want to do. A tall guy asks, "Can I make one with a snowflake inside?" A woman is saying to Peter, "White, and then green." She searches his face. "You don't like that idea."

"I think it's a fine idea," he says gently. "You just might want to clarify it a bit."

11:07 Two students gather molten glass on the ends of their pontils. One woman backs away from the furnace uncertain where to go next. Peter says, "Now take it over to the marver." To the other student, who is finishing up at the marver, he says, "I'm just behind you, on your left." She freezes, looks alarmed, and then figures out where he is and moves slightly to the right.

11:14 Peter is guiding the student at the bench. "Now heat the piece again — then use the tweezers to make the indentation." While she's flashing the glass in the glory hole, he instructs her teammate to heat the jacks and run them through a cake of beeswax.

Peter stresses teamwork in his teaching — partly because glassblowing is inherently a team activity (when Peter makes his own large pieces, he runs through the process beforehand with his team, as if choreographing a ballet). The approach is particularly useful at MIT, he believes; scientists and engineers need to collaborate, and these students tend to be pretty individualistic.

11:35 "A really nice design," Peter says, holding out his gloved hands while his student bonks her pontil to release the paperweight. He catches it. The student laughs in relief.

11:41 Across the room, Chris catches the other student's paperweight. "Nice break."

11:42 The next two students start their paperweights. The snowflake guy presses his tip of molten glass into the six white canes he's laid out to form his snowflake.

12:03 The snowflake looks more like a primitive sunburst, but it's definitely in there. As Chris carries the piece over to the annealer, the snowflake guy asks:



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"When can I pick it up?"

"Tomorrow."

"What time tomorrow?"

12:05 The students leave, and the next batch assembles. "Today we're going to be working with some color," Peter begins, patiently explaining the project again. Chris has left, replaced by Marty, who will co-teach this next two-hour session.

12:14 Peter and Marty make paperweights to demonstrate techniques to the new group.

12:50 One student says, "I want to do something with cane." Peter produces a big plastic box brimming with Ziploc bags of colored glass rods. "I'm kind of a cane maniac," he tells the student.

"A cane-iac," the student says.

1:05 While the student gathers and marvers glass for his piece, Peter lays the cane on a hotplate and shows the teammate how to heat the cane from above with a torch while the hotplate heats it from below. The hotplate rests on a ring-shaped frame over an open fire — a device Peter spotted in New Jersey, where it is commonly used for deep-frying entire turkeys.

1:10 The student presses his molten glass against the cane. At the bench, with Peter's guidance, he twists the cane into a tight, thick rope. After more heating, the rope melts and swirls into a candy-stripe pattern.

1:35 The student chills and bonks his piece. It doesn't break off.

"Water it a little more," Peter says.

This time it tumbles cleanly into Peter's waiting gloves. "A nice clean break." The teachers say this every time, like delivery-room nurses whose refrain is, "You have a beautiful baby."

1:40 It's snowing heavily outside. The temperature near the furnaces is hellish. Everyone is peeled down to T-shirts, red-faced and sweating. The lab smells of fire, beeswax, and the damp sweet smoky wooden tools. The furnaces glow; the glass glows.

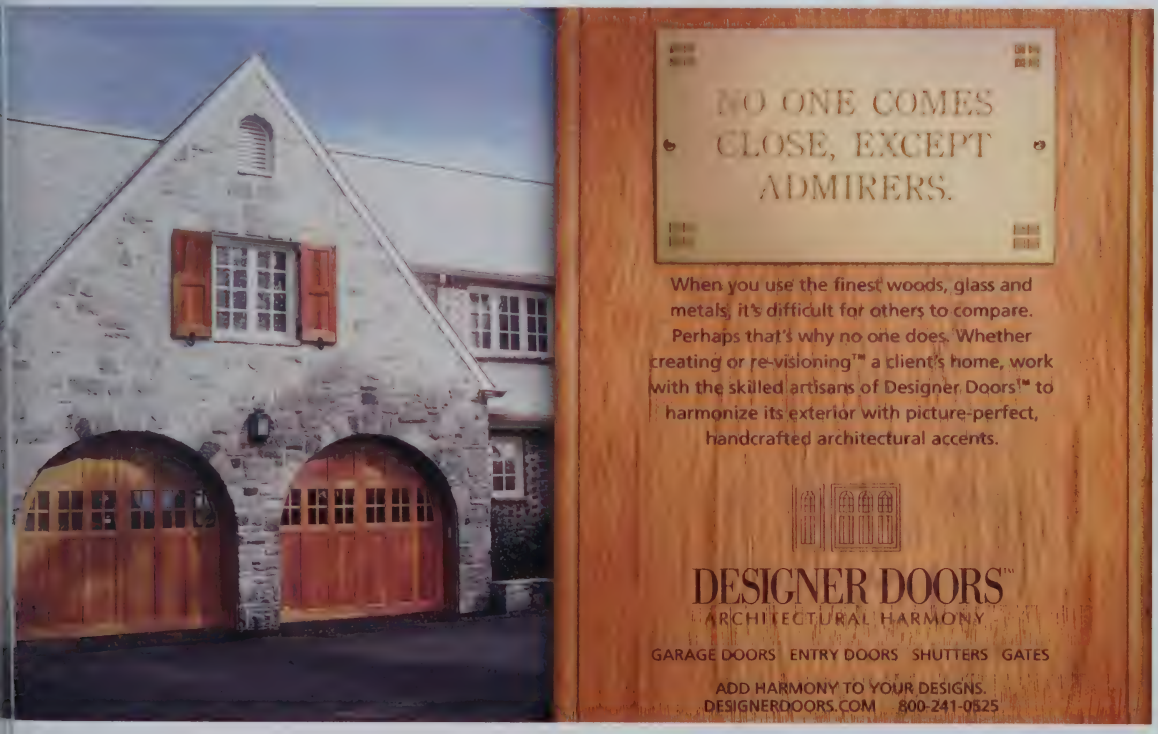
"You're going a little too fast," Peter tells the woman working at the bench. Her paperweight is big and lopsided on the tip of her pontil.

"What do I do?" she asks.

"Nothing. Slow down. Let gravity do it." She holds up the pontil, slowly turning, and the paperweight obediently evens itself out. A minute or two later, she bonks it and Peter catches it. "Good break," he says.

2:05 Another teacher has arrived, to co-teach the next two-hour session with Marty. Peter is off, to swim in the MIT pool and then go to his studio. He heads out past the next four students, who are waiting, in sunglasses, to begin gathering, marvering, and dipping into color. ✦

Joan Wickersham lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She is the author of *The Paper Answers* and is finishing a new book.



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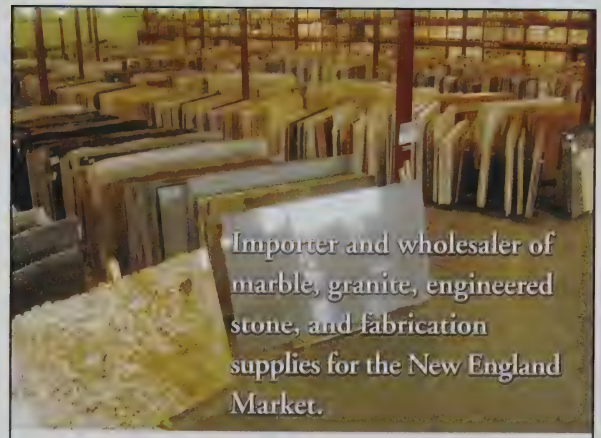
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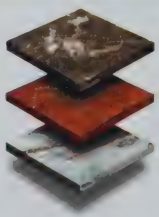
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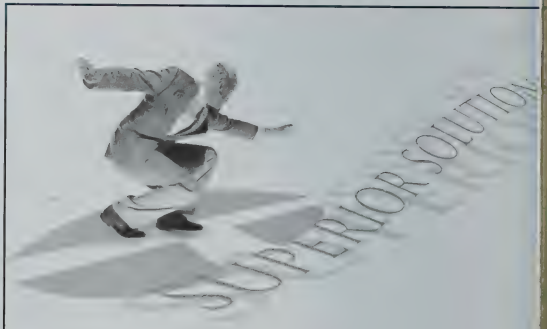
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White Noise White Light
Athens, Greece, August 2004
Architect: J. Meejin Yoon

Creating Destinations

If you build it, they might come, if they're not too busy

PARTICIPANTS

Nancy Brennan is the director of the Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy in Boston. Most recently the director of Plimoth Plantation, she was previously the director of the Bermuda Underwater Exploration Institute and the Peale Museum in Baltimore.

Annie Harris is the director of the Essex National Heritage Commission, which manages the Essex National Heritage Area. She is also a member of the Governors' Northeast Regional Competitive Council.

Peter Kuttner FAIA is president of Cambridge Seven Associates in Cambridge, Massachusetts. His work includes museums and attractions, such as Wonders of Wildlife (Missouri), Discovery Place (Kuwait), and most recently the Boston Children's Museum and the Museum of Science (as architect of record).

Ron Ostberg AIA is the chairman and director of design at The Stubbins Associates in Cambridge, Massachusetts, which designed the Venetian Hotel in Las Vegas and the new Marriott Renaissance Hotel in Boston. His clients also include the Indiana Historical Society and Strawbery Banke Museum in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

Elizabeth Padjen FAIA is the editor of *ArchitectureBoston*.

Elizabeth Padjen: "Destination" seems to be a word that is surfacing more frequently in a variety of contexts — economic development, city branding, tourism. What do you think it means? How do you hear the word "destination" used?

Annie Harris: When we who work in the National Heritage Areas talk about destination, we ask, how do you both preserve and promote what you have? We want to preserve it, but can we brand and reposition it so that people can continue to make a decent living here in the 21st century?

There's a tremendous amount of interest in trying to identify what is distinctive about a place; that's behind the urge for branding it, so what is distinctive doesn't get lost. There is increasing recognition now that historic preservation is economically important, and we're seeing a real evolution in integrating preservation in ways that contribute to the complex texture of a place. Some of the cities that are most successful as destinations are the places that have a very rich fabric that relies on a lot of old and new layers.

Ron Ostberg: The question that comes immediately to my mind is, why do we have an identity crisis with our places? Why are we going to such lengths to try to define them? I think what we're seeing is the spatial world fighting back against the virtual world, or what the writer Tom Friedman recently defined as the flat world. The spatial world faces incredible competition from the virtual world. Just 25 years ago, no one was using words like "branding destinations," in part because we didn't need to.

Peter Kuttner: There's an interesting counterpoint to the current focus on creating new destinations, and that is to rediscover places that already have those attributes. Some of them are places that we have forgotten, or somehow lost the appreciation of, because we have millions of choices and we're so mobile and we have both literal and virtual access to things. For example, the Boston Architectural Center's recent exhibition on "spirit" presented 10 spiritual places in Boston that get lost in the hustle and bustle of dramatic new buildings — places like the MIT Chapel, Walden Pond, Sanders Theater, the courtyard at the Gardner Museum. These places are examples of a kind of destination that we often take for granted because they don't obviously fill a commercial or economic purpose. They are retreats from that battle between the real and the virtual. The exhibition included a brochure



Area's Largest Tourist Attractions

- Faneuil Hall Marketplace (above)
- Museum of Science
- Minute Man National Historic Park
- New England Aquarium
- Museum of Fine Arts
- Old North Church
- Boston Duck Tours
- Plimoth Plantation
- The Children's Museum
- Salem Witch Museum
- USS Constitution & Museum
- John F. Kennedy Library & Museum
- The Sports Museum
- Franklin Park Zoo
- Boston African American National Historical Sites
- Paul Revere House
- Bunker Hill Monument
- Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum
- The Discovery Museums
- Harvard University Art Museums
- Peabody Essex Museum
- Battleship Cove
- New Bedford Whaling Museum
- National Heritage Museum
- Old State House Museum

directing visitors to these spiritual places, as well as a map of Boston on which visitors were invited to indicate with pins their own spiritual places.

Elizabeth Padjen: There is something ironic in taking spiritual places that you think of as refuges from the hype and the commercialism of the material world and marketing them as destinations.

Annie Harris: And yet those are the kinds of places that help to enrich a place, that make a community that is authentic. Sometimes the greatest challenge with creating a destination is not attracting outside visitors, but creating a real place for the people who live there. It needs to be authentic. If it works for the people who live there, then it becomes an attractive place for other people who will want to visit, or move and work there. Granted, that is an extremely different concept from Las Vegas or Disney World. Those places have some validity as escapism, but what's more interesting is the search now for what is really authentic and what really works.

Peter Kuttner: When I was a student at the University of Michigan, Greenfield Village was my initial exposure to history and preservation. It was primarily a collection of buildings that caught Henry Ford's fancy. Later, when Colonial Williamsburg became a client, I was struck by the fact that it was a real place. Duke of Gloucester Street was a real street, and all the pieces fit together — the jail, for example, was in the right relationship to the governor's house. There were extra layers of authenticity that made the experience of the place so much greater. And when I said to my clients, "This is so much richer than Greenfield Village," they said, "Yes, but that's not our competition. Our competition is Busch Gardens down the way." That particular Busch Gardens had the Old Country theme: an ersatz Germany and an ersatz France. It's sort of an amusement-park version of Epcot. Despite having the highest level of authenticity, Colonial Williamsburg was in competition with the highest level of artifice.

Ron Ostberg: But they may have more in common than they realize. Why does Busch Gardens work? Why does Colonial Williamsburg work? For the same reason: all the layers have been collapsed. There are very few people that really get excited about ambiguity — they want something they can understand, like Venice in Las Vegas — it's clean, it's safe. On the other hand, people go to Europe on vacation, where they are immersed in environments with multiple layers and take pleasure in that. Apparently our expectations change when we go abroad. And that's why Boston will always be a great destination in the United States — it's the closest thing to Europe in many respects.

Elizabeth Padjen: I think that ambiguity appeals more to people now because we've got so much stuff fired at us every day from so many different directions that we've become accustomed to dealing with complexity. The so-called living-history museums are struggling. Why is that? If they were popular at some point, they must have spoken to an understanding of authenticity in a certain time. And for some reason, either we became uncomfortable with that definition of authenticity, or we redefined it.

Peter Kuttner: The question is whether the living-history museums are losing out to Busch Gardens. If they're losing out to Boston, that's different. What's incumbent on a city like Boston is to keep the layers and interpret them. The Freedom Trail is an example of a terrific technique that allows you to avoid certain layers that act like noise while you're trying to tell one particular story. The Boston History Collaborative, with its "innovation" trails, has picked up on that — they say, in effect, we'll help you understand this complex setting one layer at a time, through a series of filters.

Nancy Brennan: There's another way to approach this, which is to ask what people with very little discretionary time are seeking. A Gallup poll showed that in 1975, the average American family had 35 hours a week of discretionary time; in 1995, it was 17 hours. Who knows what it is in 2005?

Peter Kuttner: And we were told that our biggest problem was going to be what to do in a society where we would have more and more leisure time.

Nancy Brennan: Right. But what are people seeking when they decide to pile the kids into the van for a family trip? Because I have been in the living-history business and am familiar with the prospect of 400,000 people in eight months choosing to come to a 17th-century town [Plimoth Plantation] that is located three miles away from the real 17th-century town that has a 21st-century town on top of it, I think I can say with a certain amount of credibility that people are looking for several things.

One is a template for shared experience. We all know that our individual and our family lives are fragmented. So this is a designated time when the family is going to be together having a shared experience that they can talk about, even if it's a 17-year-old boy who's kicking and screaming about being made to go. It's a social dynamic.

The second is that within this preciously small period of time, people are searching for an experience with value. Maybe it's an educational experience. Or perhaps it's the value of beauty because it's evanescent: if we don't go see the cherry blossoms in Washington, DC, they're going to be gone. People look for meaning.

The last is solace. That can have several interpretations — if not the spiritual solace that Peter talked about, then the sense of captured privacy without being lonely. I really think that is why people take time out, or escape. Escapism doesn't necessarily mean I'm going to put a bag over my head and flee from life.

Peter Kuttner: A concept that is related to that is the idea of immersion. A lot of cognitive learning studies suggest that immersion in a subject, being stimulated in a lot of different senses, is a valuable part of learning. Immersion makes it personal. In a re-created historical community with costumed people, you're immersed in another world and you can disappear. When you step into a spiritual space like the courtyard at the Boston Public Library, the rest of Boston is gone. And in a lot of our museum work, we find that people are striving for that immersive experience, whether it's some sort of re-creation or something more high-tech like IMAX. It's a desire for a full, sensory, very personal experience.

Nancy Brennan: It's time travel.

Annie Harris: Shared experience is equally important; you might say that it's an aspect of immersion, too. People yearn to have civil engagements, ways to meet other people serendipitously, through activities, in public places.

Elizabeth Padjen: And yet, I'm not sure they necessarily need to meet people. I love walking through the crowds in Kenmore Square when the Red Sox are playing. But I don't want to meet all those people.

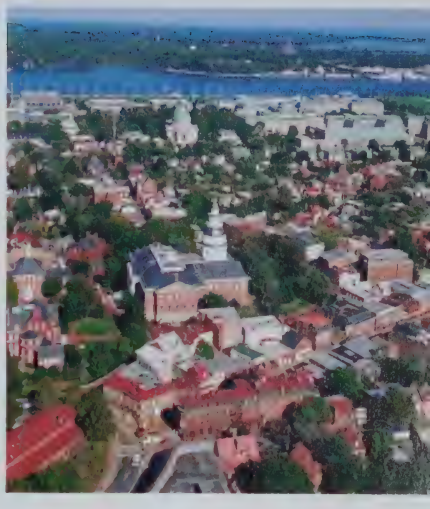
Ron Ostberg: Walking the Vietnam Memorial is a powerful experience because it's shared, even if you're alone.

Elizabeth Padjen: WaterFire in Providence is another example — it's a very mystical urban experience in a shared environment. There are three examples — each very different.

Nancy Brennan: Jane Jacobs actually talked about that in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* as a role for parks, as well as for sidewalks. Her point was that there are different degrees of interaction, all of which are endlessly fascinating, from people-watching, to eye contact with the same person you see going and coming to work every day, to sitting down and talking.

Peter Kuttner: What is key to each of those examples is that they change over time as well. Walking to the game is automatically different every time you do it. People who are trying to make something a destination are looking more than ever at programs and events.

Annie Harris: They're trying to create repeat visitors by making it different every time you come.



2005 Dozen Distinctive Destinations



Starchitecture: Must-see Sites for the Design-savvy Traveler

- Walt Disney Concert Hall, Los Angeles (above)
- Sundial Bridge, Redding, California
- Seattle Public Library, Seattle
- Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati
- Fallingwater, Bear Run, Pennsylvania
- Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts, Philadelphia
- Lever House, New York
- Pantheon, Rome
- Jubilee Church, Rome
- Temple Expiatori de la Sagrada Familia, Barcelona, Spain
- Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Spain
- Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin
- Museum of Modern Art, Forth Worth, Texas
- Reichstag, Berlin
- Jewish Museum, Berlin
- Potsdamer Platz, Berlin
- Tower Bridge, London
- British Museum Great Court, London
- Notre Dame, Paris
- Georges Pompidou National Arts and Cultural Center, Paris
- Main Hall, Lyon-Satolas Airport, Lyon, France

Source: Concierge

Ron Ostberg: I'd like to return to Nancy's question of what people are seeking, and offer another list of possibilities. Some people are looking for a safe adventure: that is, they want safety and they want adventure. Las Vegas is a wonderfully safe adventure even if you go over the top, because even the motto of the city, "What happens here stays here," is all about safety. Some living-history sites are like that, depending upon the skill of the role players. Some of them will actually drag you by the collar out of your safe position and pull you into their world, and then they really become powerful.

Then there are a lot of people who want a more cerebral experience. They want to know their origins. There are studies saying the best way to engage these people is not the way historians typically do it — which is to go back 400 years. Instead, we should go back only three generations because people can directly relate that period to their own lives. If you can get them interested in their origins, you can pull them in deeper.

And then there is a whole other world of people who are looking for whatever is hot, whatever is newly discovered. These are people who go to a hot club in New York that rises and falls in three weeks. They look at the travel section of *The New York Times* and read that Bhutan is cool, and off they go.

Peter Kuttner: What is interesting is the way people promoting destinations try to manipulate the media to respond to each of those categories. Somebody who already has an existing attraction site pretends it's a little dangerous, but lets you know it's really safe. Or they promise you somewhere safe and push it just a little bit — extreme sports, extreme eco-tourism. Or they take things that have always been around and try to put a little edge on them, not so much that you'll drown or catch fire but —

Nancy Brennan: Extreme cannolis in the North End.

Peter Kuttner: Or extreme Plimoth Plantation. I'd say one example is the Duck Tour in Boston. I can't think of anything that has been more successful. But it's essentially taking the idea of the Freedom Trail and giving it an edge by putting people in duck boats. It might feel a bit more dangerous when you're in the water, but in fact it's more passive than walking the Freedom Trail.

Annie Harris: But what makes the Duck Tours work is what makes places like Plimoth Plantation and Williamsburg work, which is the people, the guides. The physical places can only go so far; it's the personal interpretation that engages the visitor, that really makes the difference most of the time.

Ron Ostberg: That's right — we need to work more with non-spatial concepts. For example, people can be drawn to a place because it has a series of wonderful events. Events can be anything; they might be based on the liturgical calendar, or for example, our civic calendar, with First Night, the Marathon, and Fourth of July on the Esplanade. One of the things I would be tempted to do with the planning of the Greenway in Boston is not get involved in the imbroglio of its design, but do a schedule. Shouldn't there be a new event that's unique to this place? Maybe even a couple. The venue, the event, and the people together harness the civic imagination. In the '60s, the landscape architect Larry Halprin talked about "scoring" activities for public spaces. It was all about choreography.

Annie Harris: A special event — whether it's WaterFire or ice sculptures or cherry blossoms — can draw both visitors and local people; it can create a certain excitement, a certain expectation. But to make a destination really work well, you still need to build in opportunities for frequent, everyday, casual use; you create a community out of that. People create community when they walk their dogs or exercise at the health club. And you need community to sustain these destinations.

Nancy Brennan: And the architecture has to allow that to happen.

Elizabeth Padjen: It seems that there are two perceptions of the role of architecture in creating a destination: the architecture is itself the destination or the architecture provides a container for the people and activities that are the destination.

Peter Kuttner: There is a lot of talk in the museum world now about the misinterpretation of what's commonly called the Bilbao effect — the sense that Gehry's Guggenheim is the reason that the city of Bilbao got up on its feet. In reality, there were half a dozen significant capital projects that were all going on at the same time — new public structures and spaces — and there was enormous public and political will to make the city into a new place. A lot of people have interpreted Bilbao as proof of the "if you build it, they will come" theory, but they really underestimate what else was necessary to make that city a major destination.

Annie Harris: Looking locally, I think that's also an issue with the Peabody Essex Museum. It's a major building for Salem and it's been very successful. But in order to achieve long-term success, the city of Salem has to work better with it, because a building by itself cannot do it all. It's only a catalyst. A successful destination requires something that is really more comprehensive than one building; it's about the whole complex of buildings and environment — as well as the nonphysical elements. You need to have a whole community behind the effort to create an experience that will continue to draw visitors to a city over the long term.

Elizabeth Padjen: Let's talk about places that were designed as destinations but have failed. Why did they fail? What have we learned?

Peter Kuttner: I'd put into that category most of the utopian experiments in this country, whether they're communes or planned communities like Celebration and Reston. They are a slightly different kind of destination from what we've been discussing, but their intention of attracting outsiders is the same. I would have measured them as successes if they had taught us something, but they've all become just another suburb, some with more porches than others.

Another example is the idea that was floating around a few years ago that there was a connection between the retail experience and the museum experience, and that they could be put together on a small scale — like our initial relocation of the New England Sports Museum in the Cambridgeside Galleria mall. But, as we all discovered, somebody going to the mall for three hours of shopping doesn't have another two hours to go to an attraction. And the attraction isn't bringing visitors who are then going to the mall. It just didn't work at that scale.

Annie Harris: There's also a whole group of destinations that have failed because they didn't go to the extremes of Disneyland and Las Vegas in creating fantasy.

In the world of historic properties, a lot of isolated living-history complexes seem to be struggling. My work involves the messy stuff of historic properties — people living and working in them, lots of cars, development pressures. Somehow, that seems to work. It seems you have to be either messy and lively or really over the top with fantasy and glitz to succeed.

Nancy Brennan: If you're examining failures, you need to remove the impact of undercapitalization to get down to the bigger issue of whether the idea works. And that's a challenge. One example is a project that essentially tried to blend personalities, which didn't work. The Richmond History Center tried to create an immersion environment but then tried to layer *son et lumière* over it to create a spectacular experience in the evening. But they couldn't train the staff and pay them enough to pull that off. Conceptually, they borrowed a lot from Disney, but they really couldn't take it to a level where people found it believable.

Annie Harris: Isn't that because people have elevated standards through movies and Disneyland? They really have an expectation of perfection.

Nancy Brennan: Exactly. The bar is moving up. Plimoth Plantation, because it's



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- Houston

Source: The Travel Industry Association of America, the National Business Travel Association, and the Institute of Business Travel Management

such a mature research-based effort to create an immersion setting, has a sense of place that seems authentic to people. Places that can't figure out where that bar is can't meet expectations. Visitors know the difference.

Lots of places are struggling with these issues — how to balance authenticity against interpretation of an environment or history. The proponents of the new museum for the city of Boston, for example, believe that a new museum can be catalytic — it will encourage visitors to go out into the community and see the real thing after they've looked at exhibits. Some other people worry that it might cannibalize visitation from other sites or even from the real experience of Boston. These are important questions when you're hoping that a new attraction can draw 500,000 people a year.

Peter Kuttner: In Baltimore, a ticketing consultant we were working with, who studied the joint ticketing of attractions there, determined that the Inner Harbor had reached saturation for a certain level of visitation, particularly the tourism visitation. There were only so many things you could go to.

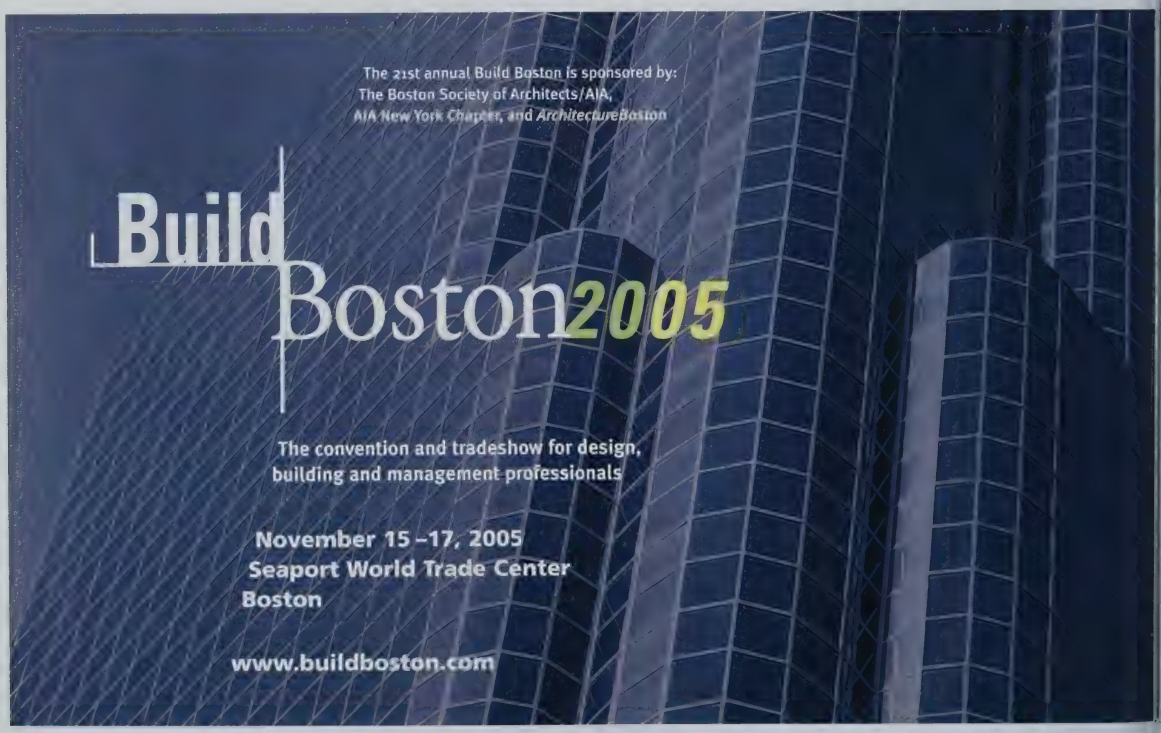
Elizabeth Padjen: Saturation is an important aspect of all this — as is Nancy's reference to raising the bar. Increased expectations create a moving target. People get numb to a certain level of experience and want stimulation beyond that. A good example is the festival marketplace. That worked fabulously; then the model was repeated, and that worked, too, until there was saturation and suddenly it didn't work anymore because it was all too familiar. Once someone comes across a successful formula and everyone else adopts it, you have to invent another formula. It's a constant game of catch-up.

Ron Ostberg: It's one thing to create a destination. It's another to create a civic identity. Those are different goals. Boston doesn't need to create a destination; it *is* a destination. It only has to be itself in all its glory to be a better destination. That may strike you as subtle, but it is a huge distinction.

Peter Kuttner: And yet Boston does have some manufactured destinations that are central to the experience of the city — places like Quincy Market and Post Office Square.

Annie Harris: They work for the tourists, and they work for the office lunch crowd. They're the kinds of places that create civic identity, that make the city real, that make it work for the people who live here as well as for visitors.

Elizabeth Padjen: Many of the successful destinations we've talked about have been rather upscale, if not glitzy. Can a destination be downscale and still succeed? It seems that the people who are invited to create destinations tend to be the people who are the stylists of our



culture — the designers, the architects, the graphics people, the marketing and media people. I wonder if that's inadvertently creating an attitude about destination, perhaps over-designing it. Maybe there's another approach.

Ron Ostberg: If something has a great reputation for value, it can be downright dowdy. Do you remember Legal Seafood in the beginning?

Annie Harris: Artists are a great example of people who create destinations in other ways — moving into down-and-out districts and making them lively. About 25 years ago, lower Manhattan was just artists — it was a deserted, incredibly dirty, funky place. And now it's unbelievably lively; most artists can barely afford to live there now. Music, ethnic and folk culture, and of course restaurants can all create attractive destinations. You don't necessarily have to program them. You create interesting places and people want to be there.

Nancy Brennan: The neighborhoods of New York seem to turn around much faster than they do in this region. It's a provocative question: When does a reputation turn? Where is that tipping point? Lots of places have gone from, "Oh, I'm not sure," to, "Oh yes, let's go." Philadelphia is an example of a city that has managed in the last several years to go to that tipping point and beyond. Cradle of American democracy notwithstanding, people previously weren't particularly interested in visiting Philadelphia. And that has really changed, as a result of marketing and investment. Somehow they found the right critical mass, a variety of things to do, and promoted it. But I also think that it had to do with a sense of civic identity.

Peter Kuttner: And leadership. Drexel and the University of Pennsylvania have joined in a bigger partnership with industry and the medical center to fix up their side of the river.

Annie Harris: It's part of a new model of educational institutions doing their own development and engaging the larger community. Providence is another great turnaround story. I think, like Philadelphia, it had public will, public leadership, and public money. I'd like to suggest that Philadelphia and Providence offer a more sustainable model for creating destinations than do some of the manufactured destinations we've talked about. It's not just about tourism. We need to create environments where people want to be, where the jobs want to come, where people want to live. Goodness knows that with the housing prices in this area, you have to have a lot of things going for you in order to attract and keep workers. By looking at communities more broadly in terms of economic development, we can turn the question around. Instead of asking, will you come to our destination, we will hear, how can we be part of your destination? ■







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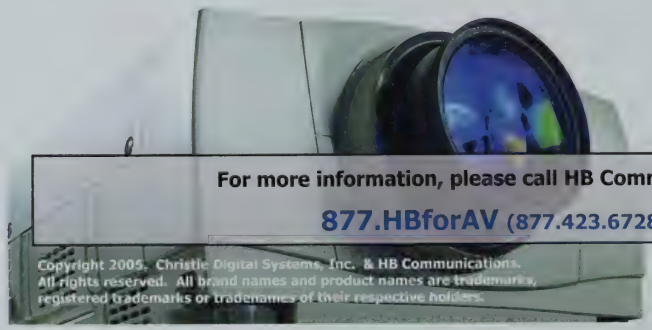
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life is a game

Video games can provide a home away from home

BY LON R. GROHS, ASSOC. AIA

Worlds removed from the everyday hassles of the construction industry — where budgets, punch lists, and paperwork rule — lies another territory, where astonishing buildings are created with nary a lawsuit or insurance claim — even if their occupants do tend to be subject to an unprecedented amount of bloodshed and gore.

Video games today constitute a multi-billion-dollar industry that depends upon a delicate balance of fantasy and reality: enough fantasy to constitute entertainment, and enough reality to make the experience fully absorbing. Architecture in this virtual environment serves the same purpose as it does in the physical environment: it creates a sense of place. But in a video game, it must also support a story. In some games, architecture provides the backdrop for the activities of the characters: the surreal environments of Myst 4 allude to the mysterious nature of the gameplay. In others, such as SimCity 4, architecture to a great degree *is* the game. And still others absorb the language of architecture to allow players to create alternate virtual lives on the Internet. In MarsNext, you can become a certified citizen of Mars and own a deed to a virtual residence. At Second Life, you can own your dream house and yacht. One gamer spent $26,500 in real-world currency on a virtual island in the role-playing game Project Entropia.

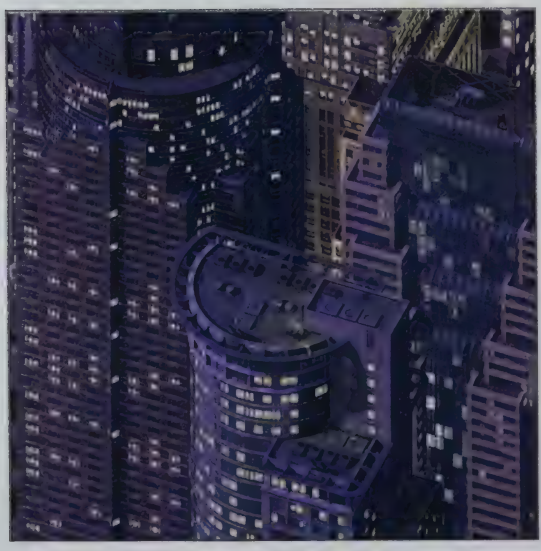
The technologies used in the creation of built architecture and virtual architecture share the same DNA, with sometimes surprisingly different results. As Michael Wu of Microsoft's Bungie Studios notes, "It is easy to lose your way and get lost in a virtual world. We don't feel temperature changes, remember the effort of going up stairs, or notice the slight change in light from one office to the next. Remove all senses except vision, and suddenly you realize just how few cues there are."

As more architecture schools adopt courses in virtual-environment design, we can expect that more designers will be drawn to careers in the virtual world. And among those who are committed to building in the physical world, we may see new design sensibilities. "Architecture doesn't necessarily express the relationship between spaces visually," Wu observes. "In fact it would seem that most contemporary buildings let signage do all the work. People have become accustomed to reading a directory rather than the building itself. But in a game, a player standing in front of a directory will get a melee attack from the back or get sniped from the flank within moments." ■

Lon R. Grohs, Assoc. AIA, is the director of architectural visualization at Neoscape in Boston. He is a member of the American Society of Architectural Illustrators and the New York Society of Renderers.







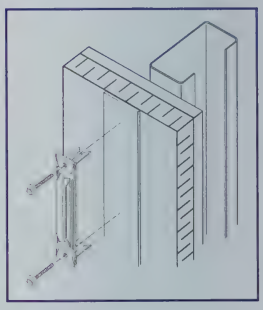


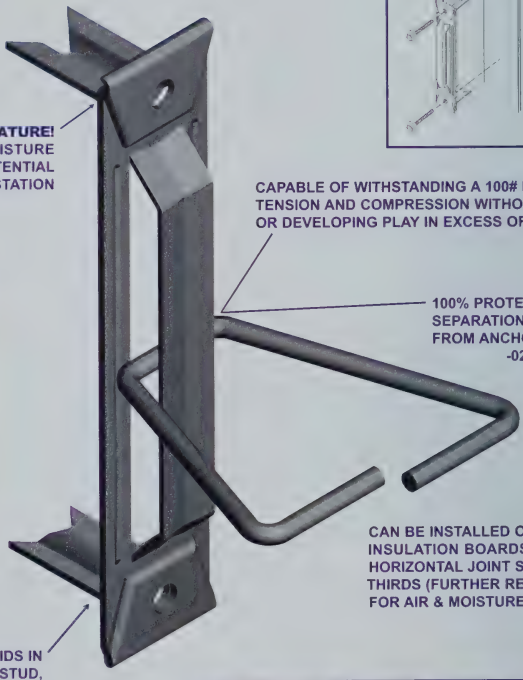


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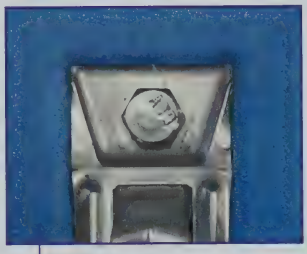




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The Great Escape

When you get the urge for going, is there a need to go?

BY RACHEL LEVITT

My parents taught me this about travel: a vacation should be an extension of school — an important learning opportunity. And so, while other kids went to the shore, we took helicopter rides to Greenland and boat trips to remote fishing islands. I knew I would never see Disneyland.

In the early '70s, the world had become just stable enough to be consumed in relative safety; even so, most people ventured to the usual haunts. But that was about to change. Modern cynicism, globalization, and self-discovery were prodding us out of the comfortable places, forcing us deeper into the mountains, jungles, and cities for a real escape. This was the moment when Tony and Maureen Wheeler traveled the "hippie trail" from London to Sydney. Their friends asked them to write up the details so that they could go, too. The resulting hand-written tour book, published in 1973, became an instant bestseller: *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Eventually renamed *The Lonely Planet*, it provided a restless generation with a blueprint for adventure.

The Wheelers appeared just when post-Watergate cynics were beginning to eye Fodor and Frommer and Fielding with suspicion. "*Lonely Planet* created a floating fourth world of people who traveled full time," Pico Iyer noted recently in *The New Yorker*. "The guides encouraged a counter-Victorian way of life, in that they exactly reversed the old imperial assumptions. Now the other cultures are seen as the wise place, and we are taught to defer to them."

As airlines deregulated, tickets got cheap, and formerly off-limit places like Cambodia and China and, later, Eastern Europe opened up to tourist dollars. Now, travel is *de rigueur*. We don't just go on vacation anymore — we go someplace. It's not enough to pack bags and disappear for a few weeks. Like where we went to college, where we travel speaks worlds about our sophistication

and self-importance. Did we do an all-inclusive in Cancun, or did we witness a nocturnal lion hunt in South Africa? Did we play the wanderer, the collector, the hunter, or the gatherer? The unspoken message is that if we go someplace exotic, we must have very weighty and demanding lives from which we must occasionally flee.

In fact, the quest for an escape from everyday life is undoubtedly the psychological root of all this frantic vacationing, a phenomenon that probably plagued our species when we were swinging from tree to tree. It's one-third territorial envy and two-thirds getting away from ourselves. If you look at humankind's need for escape from itself as an evolutionary necessity, then the current tendency to propagandize today's wanderlust as a modern phenomenon seems downright silly. How else could you explain our lingering presence in outright hostile environments? Like that house in Amityville, the Manitoba climate says, "get out," but there we are, fully adapted, as if living closer to the equator was so last ice age.

So what are the little things we seek during our two weeks of abandon? For one thing, leaving home forces us to use the survival muscles that have atrophied while we stared at the computer. In a different airport, in a different hotel, in an unknown city, we rely on instinct to avoid getting lost or mugged or ripped off. Once we are oriented, the slight differences in culture, language, or climate magically transform daily tasks into meaningful encounters. John Urry, a British sociologist, calls this phenomenon "the tourist gaze." He explains that the minute differences imbue things with meaning, worthy of investigation, or at least a picture.

For some of us, traveling isn't in itself powerful enough to be cathartic. Some of us have to try on someone else's life to really satisfy our urge to flee. Each year, countless soccer moms and dads show up at the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally in Sturgis, South Dakota, on shiny Harleys, decked in full leathers and fake tattoos. At home they may wear green pants embroidered with little whales, but at the rally, everyone is sporting chains and bandanas. I'm not qualified to say who's a real biker and who isn't, but I trust a friend of mine who claims to be gang-literate. When I asked him why he thought these good suburbanites trade their microfiber and Gore-Tex for the chance to wear leather chaps in the rain, he said, "They are trying not to be who they are. They are escaping their reality to someone else's because theirs is so boring."

Fortunately for most of us, we can get that escapist feeling just by staying tuned. For 50 years, television has been training us to see a substitute reality in its flat screen. So it's no coincidence that programming mimics the escapes we seek. There are the obvious forms: travel shows and travel networks. More interesting, though, are the plethora of voyeuristic stories, covering everything from death (*CSI*), to suburbia (*Desperate Housewives*), to über-suburbia (*The Sopranos*). By watching these shows, we can walk out of our lives without risking bodily harm. And for the voyeur escapist who thirsts for the real thing, hundreds of reality shows offer the opportunity to watch someone else risk bodily harm.

This is why the television now gets its own cushy room: Enter the home theater, a veritable shrine to entertainment, standard for any house over 5,000 square feet. Homeowners can choose from a plethora of home theater systems, surround-sound speakers, as well as full and flat screens, giant projection screens, and plasma screens — not to mention amenities such as soundproofing, better-than-theater seating, dimmable lighting, and lobby-sized popcorn machines.

If the home is our primary retreat, and if through technology we can escape even further, is it possible that our houses will be geared to support life and fantasy in equal measure?

Remember the *Star Trek* Holodeck — the synthetic, immersive, virtual-reality environment in which Enterprisers could play out their fantasies, or just take an earthly break? The home theater is as close as we can get, for now.

So if the home is our primary retreat, and if through technology we can escape even further, is it possible that one day our houses will be geared to support life and fantasy in equal measure? *The Well-Tempered Environment*, written by Reyner Banham in the 1960s, suggested that environmental engineering had a profound impact on the design of buildings and on the minds of architects. Arguing that modern buildings breathe, sweat, consume, and expel like any organic body, Banham's seminal text produced architects like Norman Foster and Renzo Piano, who used mechanical services as imagistic devices. That was back in the days when playing out the American dream meant choosing between a miniature chalet, ranch, or two-story colonial.

In the spirit of Banham's mechanical prophecy, 21st-century home design is on the verge of being re-tuned again, but to a different system. The façade and roofline may never change, telling the same old story about European planning and imperial values. But pop the roof off a McMansion and search for life. Look beyond the cathedral ceilings, baroque staircases leading to glorious sheets of drywall, the ghostly living rooms, and the intimidating, two-story entrance. Wedged between these residential relics are signs of life. People congeal around the hulking TV in the family room, over computer desks in corners cluttered with paper or in spotless showcase kitchens with shades constantly drawn over the windows to minimize screen glare. Walls are Wi-Fi obstacles at worst, conduits for CAT-5 cable at best. Residential design is no longer about space, but about serving us up what matters most: From outside, the picture of longevity and Protestant productivity. From within, big empty rooms, and dark, hidden, hi-tech pods in which we relax, watch, and escape. ■

Rachel Levitt is a designer and researcher in Boston.



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Take That: The Art of Borrowing from Elsewhere

BY MATTHEW BRONSKI





Opposite, left: Morrill House, Strafford, Vermont. Opposite, right: Lyndhurst, Tarrytown, New York. Above left: Second Empire house, Wetherfield, Connecticut. Above, right: Hiberian Hall, Charleston, South Carolina.

Not a single Gothic building was ever built in America. Yet America has seemingly countless numbers of Gothic Revival, Carpenter Gothic, Ruskinian Gothic, High Victorian Gothic, neo-Gothic, and Collegiate Gothic buildings.

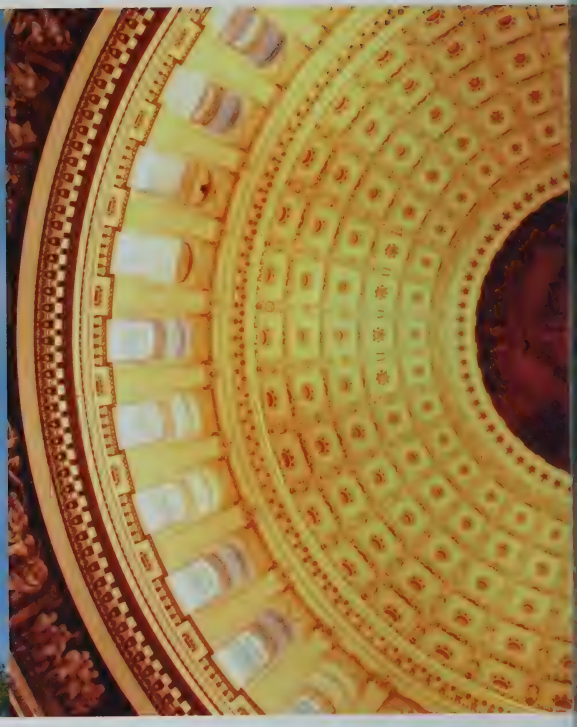
The history of architecture has been largely a history of borrowing and adapting forms, styles, materials, and techniques from elsewhere — from other places and other times. For millennia, information traveled slowly; both personal travel and transportation of materials from afar were relatively expensive. Despite these obvious impediments, architectural borrowing from elsewhere occurred even when no obvious need existed. Although the Romans were remarkably innovative designers and builders, they nonetheless saw fit to borrow stylistic forms and decorative devices from the Greeks. More recently, the history of American architecture is very much a history of architectural borrowing. From the 16th through the 18th century, early settlers borrowed the forms and methods of their native lands, creating a cultural legacy that is still visible today: Spanish in Florida, French and Spanish in Louisiana, Dutch in New York, and English in Virginia and New England. Later, in the 19th century, myriad styles were adapted from other places and other times, including common styles such as Greek Revival, Italianate, Gothic Revival, and Second Empire and, less frequently, Egyptian Revival and other Exotic Revivals.

Why does architectural borrowing occur? The reasons may be as numerous and varied as the instances of borrowing. For early settlers of the American continent, the ability to quickly erect shelter was critical to survival, and they built in the way that they knew. Borrowing was simply easier than innovating. In few other cases do the reasons seem as overtly pragmatic. In 19th-century America, stylistic and symbolic considerations in architecture largely replaced the need for rapid construction of shelter for survival (aside from the frontier). In the 1830s, the Greek Revival became the first truly national style of architecture across the United States. The obvious symbolic reference to civilization's first great democracy reflected widespread pride in our young nation's democratic ideals.

Borrowing necessarily involves reinterpretation, and this reinterpretation imparts the stamp of its own culture and time, either consciously or, more often, subconsciously. The wood-framed, white clapboard, Greek Revival houses found across America are quite different from any building found in ancient or modern Greece. In 1830s America — still a largely rural nation whose ideals and aspirations greatly exceeded her power and wealth — the simple wood reinterpretation of a Greek temple front became a secular sign for democracy. American architecture was learning from Las Vegas long before Las Vegas even existed.

From the mid-19th through early 20th century, a greater diversity of architectural styles flourished, while at the same time the reasons for borrowing tended to become more varied. For example, the popularity of the Italianate style in





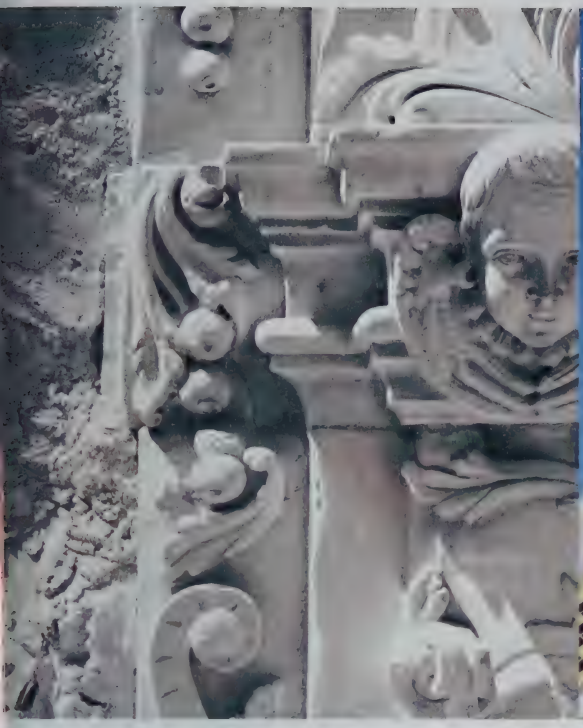
mid-19th-century America (borrowed from the Italian villa) can be attributed to a number of factors, including a fascination with the Picturesque, an appreciation for centuries of Italian arts and culture, and the influential writings of Andrew Jackson Downing, an arbiter of taste who advocated the Italianate style, among others, for country houses. Such borrowing was institutionalized in the neo-classical architectural education of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Beaux Arts teaching model, and the phenomenon of the "Grand Tour." Stylistic emulation reached its zenith in the early 20th century, when numerous period revivals (Tudor Revival, Colonial Revival, Spanish Colonial, neo-Gothic, neo-Classical) simultaneously thrived. Even that most American of all architectural innovations, the skyscraper, was often cloaked in neo-classical garb.

The freedom to root around in the stylistic attics of other places and periods comes with the understanding that "elsewhere" is both a physical place and a state of mind. A reinterpretation of a simple rural building form — be it a 1920s revival of an English Cotswold cottage or a contemporary minimalist cedar-shingled Maine cottage — is intended to suggest the pleasures of the uncomplicated life rather than mere architectural derivation. However, with the Modern Movement's professed desire to break free of the past, borrowing from previous periods became philosophically taboo for the first time in the history of architecture. (Later, Postmodernism purposefully and antagonistically eschewed Modernism's taboo, overtly borrowing well-known architectural elements and forms, which it reinterpreted or caricatured as signs. While Postmodernism embraced such reuse of architectural elements, few architects dare borrow from Postmodernism today.)

Although the Modern Movement vehemently opposed reusing the architectural forms of previous centuries, ironically, many architects continue to borrow heavily from it. If, as Robert Hughes declared, the Modern Movement conclusively ended 33 years ago with the implosion of the Pruitt-Igoe housing complex, then designing a building today that draws heavily from the Modern Movement is not fundamentally different from other instances of architectural borrowing of forms from a previous century and a bygone architectural movement (aside from the fact that some architects engaged in this revival actually remember it first-hand).

American architecture was learning from Las Vegas long before Las Vegas even existed.

Architectural borrowing has never been restricted to forms and styles, but has long also involved details and actual building materials. Although they worked quarries close to Rome, the Romans transported obelisks from Egypt to erect in their streets. Around 1820, despite nearby quarries of durable Quincy granite, Alexander Parris transported Aquia sandstone from the





Opposite, left: Minaret, Tampa Bay Hotel, Tampa Bay, Florida. Opposite, right: Rotunda, US Capitol. Above left: Mission Church, San Jose, California. Above right: Museum of Man, San Diego, California.

Chesapeake Bay for the columns of St. Paul's Cathedral in Boston — a material that was later found to be remarkably *non*-durable. Unfortunately, many architects and builders have continued to repeat Parris's technical mistake. Seduced by the aesthetic allure of a material from afar, they have rushed to use it, only to learn its drawbacks later: that beautiful, rustic clay roofing tile from the Mediterranean can disintegrate in a New England winter. Even architects borrowing their own details from afar have run into technical pitfalls: the simple, frameless window glass set in masonry in Le Corbusier's work at Chandigarh, India, has been prone to hailstorm breakage at his convent of Ste. Marie de la Tourette in France.

And yet, invaluable technical lessons have always been learned by judiciously borrowing from elsewhere. In Book II of his 2,000-year-old text *The Ten Books of Architecture*, the Roman architect Vitruvius recommends specific stone wall-building techniques that he has observed to be durable in Greek buildings. As engineer Werner Gumpertz has taught many New Englanders, the Swiss chalet offers a stellar model for durable dwellings in snowy climates: a steeply sloped roof with no valleys or dormers; broad roof overhangs; and a high masonry foundation to keep wood walls above drifting and melting snow.

Unless every architectural project invents completely new and previously unimagined forms, details, and materials, some degree of architectural borrowing is inevitable. The growing challenge then is to decide from what sources and in what ways architectural borrowing is appropriate. Today, appreciation of different cultures and places is in the mainstream of the well-educated and politically correct. Inexpensive container shipping makes building materials from all over the world available at our local supply yards. Laser surveying and computer-aided drawing make recording and transcribing existing buildings rapid and accurate. Images and even drawings of significant buildings abroad are available online or on CD. Information is instantly accessible through the Internet, and e-mail enables us to easily share ideas with our colleagues abroad. All these factors create conditions that are more conducive to architectural borrowing than ever before.

Everyone talks about globalization. Somehow, we tend to think of it as a passive transformation, something that is inevitably happening to the cultures and places that we know and care about. Perhaps the most long-standing tradition in architecture, from Vitruvius forward, is setting off for elsewhere with sketchbook and pen in hand, seeking inspiration and good ideas. If we stop seeing the sole architectural implication of globalization as homogenization and blanderization, we might also see it as an unprecedented opportunity in the continuum of inspiration, good ideas, and important lessons from elsewhere. ▲

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New England's tourism
economy isn't new —
it has a history all its own

The Road Well Traveled

Dona Brown talks with Phyllis Andersen



Rodick House hotel, Bar Harbor, Maine, in 1882.

Dona Brown is an associate professor in the department of history at the University of Vermont and the director of the Center for Research on Vermont. She is the author of *Inventing New England: Regional Tourism in the Nineteenth Century* (Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995) and the editor of *A Tourist's New England: Travel Fiction, 1820-1920* (University Press of New England, 1999).

Phyllis Andersen is a landscape historian and the former director of the Institute for Cultural Landscape Studies of the Arnold Arboretum. She is a member of the editorial board of *ArchitectureBoston*.

Phyllis Andersen: In your book *Inventing New England*, you describe the appeal of old-time New England and how much that appeal was driven in the 19th century by art, literature, and good old-fashioned marketing. Today, it's hard for us to conceive of New England as ever having been new, to imagine that tourists visited the region for new architecture, landscape, and ideas.

Dona Brown: Travelers came to New England in the first part of the 19th century for two different reasons. One was rooted in the "grand tour" tradition — elite travelers going from city to city, looking for characteristic expressions of the culture of that city. For instance, travelers going to Boston in the early 19th century would expect to see the institutions that characterized the region: for education, they would go to Harvard; for religion, they would go to sermons preached by some of the Unitarian ministers. William Ellery Channing was a big tourist draw.

The second reason is that New England had a well-deserved reputation in the 19th century for being very modern. It was the home of a lot of technological and industrial innovations. Travelers wanted to see Lowell, for example. It was also well known for educational innovation and social reform experiments, such as the education of the deaf at Hartford.

Phyllis Andersen: What happened after the Civil War that transformed New England into a region whose power was based on nostalgia?

Dona Brown: It was a very interesting series of transformations. Far from being hurt by the Civil War, New England actually gained. The region emerged as a great industrial powerhouse





Left: Boating party on Maine lake, 1891. Right: Railway, Mount Washington, New Hampshire, 1895.

that attracted immigrants from all over the world. Fortunes were made and cities were growing. So what's wrong with this picture? Several things. One is that industrial development was not evenly spread out. The industrial and urban development was located primarily in southern New England. At the same time, in northern and western New England, it was pulling people away from the rural areas. So part of the impact was economic. Part was demographic. These kinds of changes caused a lot of New Englanders to look again at what they'd done and to think about where they'd come from, what their past was, and whether their heritage was in danger.

Phyllis Andersen: Many New England communities today are turning to tourism as a solution to economic decline caused by the loss of local industry. You have documented that many 19th-century communities turned to the same solution for many of the same reasons. Are there any lessons to be learned from communities that overreached in their attempt to reinvent themselves as tourist attractions?

Dona Brown: The lesson may be, very simply, that tourism is not as clean an industry as it seems to be. It appears to have no side effects, but it does have serious long-term consequences. In particular, people should think about what the long-term effect will be of selling something that's dear to them, whether that is a landscape or sense of place or ethnic heritage.

Phyllis Andersen: Because in a sense they're giving it away?

Dona Brown: They are. And will it mean the same thing when someone else is controlling it? That's the danger, and it's a subtle one. It's hard to see the danger of that when you're really hurting, when there's high unemployment.

Phyllis Andersen: Can you think of any examples of communities that mounted large tourism campaigns and failed miserably?

Dona Brown: The best example is Nantucket, which of course ultimately succeeded beyond anyone's imagination. But its first attempts failed dismally. It tried to model itself on Oak Bluffs, on Martha's Vineyard, by developing big hotels and cottage lots to create a classic mid-19th-century beach experience. That all went over like a lead balloon. But in the 1870s and 1880s, promoters began to pitch Nantucket differently, actively distinguishing it from the Vineyard with its quaintness and sense of time gone by. I'm not sure that it was a conscious intention, but it worked.

Phyllis Andersen: You write so eloquently about the power of New England scenery and its emotional and physical effects on tourists. But you also describe how people needed to be told where to go, what to look at, and what to feel when they got there — the sense that the unguided experience was no experience at all. New England scenery was often described using European reference points: the White Mountains were advertised as the Switzerland of America. Wouldn't you agree that it's not unique to the 19th century? How people frame their travel experiences so often depends on external sources.

Dona Brown: That's fundamental to understanding what tourism is. There have always been travelers; there have not always been tourists. That's not a snobbish distinction. There have always been people who traveled for pleasure, but there have not always been tourist industries designed to cater to consumers of tourist experiences. As soon as that commercial enterprise began, it became clear that there were opportunities to develop niches in helping people to understand what they were seeing. It might have been as simple as a guide book listing places you might want to visit and then suggesting why you might want to go there, to much more complex interventions: "Stand at this site at four o'clock in the afternoon and remember these words of Wordsworth."

Phyllis Andersen: You've noted that the idea of "the picturesque" was nurtured here in New England by literary sources. People were open to the idea that there might be a spiritual content in the landscape, but they wanted to be told what that was in order to have the right reaction.

Dona Brown: That of course has to do with the fact that Americans were uncertain about this new experience of landscape. They were a generation or two behind the Europeans in developing this sensibility, and so they were in general quite nervous about doing it correctly. People knew that the proper appreciation of landscape was a sign of your social status, your education, your gentility.

Phyllis Andersen: It's amusing to read their accounts of feeling they had to be educated before they could have a direct emotional experience. But I think Americans today still carry a little bit of that with us when we travel, particularly to sophisticated European capitals.

Dona Brown: Yes, absolutely. There is that sense that as a tourist, you are on trial: When should you be excited? When should you be blasé? That's why "tourist" is a term of insult for many people. One rarely thinks of oneself as a tourist. That would suggest that you have no idea how to react properly to what you are seeing.

Phyllis Andersen: But if you are a "traveler," you are probably more attuned to exotic locales and educational experiences versus pure leisure.

Dona Brown: Yes. And that's why, even though it's amusing to read those accounts by early travelers, they weren't being foolish. It really was the case that they were judged by their reactions. Proper appreciation of scenery was a sign of class standing. There's a wonderful quotation from Nathaniel Willis, the 19th-century editor, who wrote that trees in America are meaningless — they exist because no one has cut them down yet. But trees in England mean status, class, and money. Wherever you see trees there, some rich man has nurtured them. Therefore, in England, trees are scenery.

Phyllis Andersen: You have observed that the most popular activity of late-19th-century tourists wasn't hiking or bicycling, but writing. If we think of it as documenting the experience, then the modern equivalent is probably video and photography.

Dona Brown: Yes — that's an apt comparison. Part of the experience is recording yourself having the experience.

Phyllis Andersen: But if you force yourself to write about your experience, then you're probably engaging in it more directly than if you take a quick, more impersonal photograph.

Dona Brown: You're right, but I've also seen old diaries with commentary like, "Rode through the Notch in the White Mountains. Extremely impressive."

Phyllis Andersen: The same as a postcard today.

Dona Brown: Exactly. And that entry would not have taken much more time than aiming the camera.

Phyllis Andersen: Let's talk a bit about the conflict that is inherent in tourism — the conflict between people who work and people who play. One aspect of it was a social hierarchy attached to specific places that certainly persists today; that is, you are who you are because of where you vacation. It's not unique to New England, but it does seem firmly entrenched here.

Dona Brown: It is especially entrenched here simply because of the long history of many of the vacation places. One of the most intriguing things that I've found in my research is the degree to which people were able to segregate themselves while on vacation, far in excess of what they were able to do at home. In general, 19th-century cities were not really segregated, whereas vacation places were often highly segregated, not just by social class but also by extremely fine lines of social distinction, by religion, and of course by ethnicity.

Phyllis Andersen: And at the same time, they created new kinds of social distinctions, such as the split between vacationers and the people who worked for them, that persists even today. Cape Cod is always a good example, as are all of those New England summer communities where the people who work for the people who visit have some sort of longstanding resentment about their role.

Dona Brown: Sometimes, it's completely situational. Some of those workers go on vacation to another place and then they become the people playing and not the people working. But, at least in the 19th century, there tended to be deep divisions between the visitors and the people who lived and worked in the host location. We see evidence of it particularly in places where the marketing pitch of the place was nostalgic. There's a wonderful quotation from a little novel about Nantucket, in which one of the characters says, "It's not pleasant having the things that we take seriously and that we do every day being made into a joke." That's fairly characteristic.

Phyllis Andersen: And yet many local people had their lives transformed in a positive way by increased tourism.

Dona Brown: There are many accounts of people who said tourism was the best thing that ever happened to their town. It wasn't just the economics. Sometimes they would say, this was such a boring place, but now it's more exciting with more interesting people from far away.

Phyllis Andersen: One changing aspect of tourism in New England seems to be the role of risk. Early 19th-century tourism in New England seemed to be enhanced by the idea of risk. But later in the century, risk-free travel became highly valued, as it seems to be today. By the early 20th century, New England had become the choice of conservative travelers. They seem to have traded adventure for comfort.

Dona Brown: Of course, travel in the early 19th century was fundamentally a much more risky enterprise. But even more important is the fact that those travelers, especially those who



The Gilbreth family (*Cheaper by the Dozen*) on vacation, Nantucket, 1923.

were interested in scenery, were influenced by the concept of "the sublime." The sublime experience of nature requires risk — you need to feel that nature is bigger than you are. You need to feel that it's towering over you, or that you're on the precipice, or that the ocean is about to wash you away. That combined sense of beauty and terror is what they were looking for in the natural world: Niagara Falls; Crawford Notch; the Isles of Shoals, where the ocean was so much bigger than the land. And people associated that experience with New England in the early years.

There was a natural progression in the late 19th century as the West opened to travel and tourism. The Grand Canyon and the Rockies are more sublime than most of New England. By the late 19th century, nearly all of New England was completely deforested. It was no longer a sublime landscape; it had become a pastoral one. And it had become very well traveled: there were lots of hotels everywhere. If you add to that the marketing of New England as a nostalgic, pastoral experience, New England emerges as familiar and safe, while Alaska or the Rockies or Yellowstone become the adventure.

Phyllis Andersen: In a very amusing part of your book, you relate the misadventures of William Dean Howells and his family seeking the perfect vacation spot. He comes across as having a 19th-century Chevy Chase/National Lampoon–type vacation, with enormous mosquitoes and a too-close engagement with his landlord's marital problems. What came out of that description was the classic vacation sense of heightened expectation dashed by reality. Did New England entrepreneurs set themselves up for failure by overselling themselves?

Dona Brown: I think they did. One example is the early promoters of Vermont's agri-tourist experience. They oversold, or maybe sold incorrectly, what they had to offer, because they seriously misunderstood their potential clientele. They believed that they could provide the kinds of intangible experiences associated with the farm: peace; a job well done; rural values; simple joys. I don't think that most tourists actually wanted those things. In fact, I don't think those things can be provided for tourists.

Phyllis Andersen: Now we are seeing luxury farm vacations, where the idea of comfort is promoted because nobody really wants to sleep in a hayloft.

Dona Brown: The problem is that urban people then and now have a very nostalgic impression about what they will encounter on the farm. You can find discussions of this in the women's pages of late 19th-century farm magazines, where women wrote in with letters about the experience of having city people stay with them on the farm. There's one letter I'll never forget — the woman says, "Your visitors think the farm is so delightful, and they love that glass of fresh buttermilk that you bring to them while they're sitting on the veranda. And you say to yourself it all looks so lovely, one day you'd like to try it, too."

Phyllis Andersen: You've also explored the impacts in the 20th century of auto touring, which allowed tourists to embrace perfectly restored country villages, such as Litchfield, Stockbridge, and Woodstock. At that point, the lines between authenticity and simple beautification really started to blur. As in the small villages of France and Great Britain, which are of course also well-traveled tourist traps, many residents of these beautifully restored villages live on income derived from urban enterprises. Their connection to rural life is really rather lately acquired.

Dona Brown: Whenever you go in search of authenticity, you're bound to be disappointed, here or in France or anywhere. Those villages have a long history and it's difficult to know at what point they stopped being authentic, particularly if you look at a place like Litchfield, which you can say has now experienced well over 100 years of reinterpretation. Perhaps the mistake is that these villages attract notions of unchanging stability. And, of course, they are not representations of unchanging stability. As long as we know that they are the products of multi-layered histories and can accept that, we can understand them perfectly well.

Phyllis Andersen: I suppose the historian can do that. But it's hard to convince the local tourist bureau to present a layered approach, a lot of which involves 20th-century layers.

Dona Brown: It's ironic, too. I'm sure that the residents of Litchfield 200 years ago would have been insulted by the designation "rural." Up until the beginning of the 20th century, the residents of Litchfield thought of themselves as urban people, very sophisticated, very much in touch with the mainstream of the world. Then the restorationists of the 20th century gave it this sense of isolation and stability, as if it were set in a particular time period, never to change.

Phyllis Andersen: I think the word "stability" best characterizes what makes these villages so attractive to urban dwellers who see change around them every day. It appears these places haven't changed, but of course they've changed profoundly.

Dona Brown: And that's the source of the deepest disagreements between historians and the people who love these places. The one thing you learn by looking at history is that there are no places that are unchanging. As someone once told me, no one has ever lived in the past. But it's natural for all of us in the modern world to try to find some point of unchanging center. Not possible, but always longed for.

Phyllis Andersen: How much do today's tourists really want to see behind the façade, whether it's a country village or a beautiful Vermont town? Looking beyond that may not be part of what you want to think about on vacation.

Dona Brown: That's one reason I admire the historians who work at historical museums, because it is a difficult job to present a story to people who may be only marginally interested or even aggressively uninterested in knowing how things really were.

Phyllis Andersen: What's interesting about that whole field is how the interpretive story has changed with each generation of interpreters. The stories aren't set, they are never set, and in fact, they should always be changing in response to different points of view. Williamsburg is a great example.

Dona Brown: One of my favorite examples is the Shapiro House at Strawbery Banke in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, which has been reinterpreted as a 1919 tenement of Russian-Jewish immigrants, which it actually was. It's a wonderfully daring and interesting phenomenon, especially when you look at the long history of the removal of historic houses and their interpretation as things that they never were.

Phyllis Andersen: It complicates the interpretation of Strawbery Banke, but enriches it so much.

Dona Brown: In general, that is what I see happening with our understanding of what New England is as a place. The early historians and promoters were committed to a particular story about New England, and that story was about their ancestors





and the values they espoused, often in direct opposition to new people and new politics. That's not so true any more. Lowell's designation as a national park represented a real sea change — New England was forced to recognize that the region is not all Yankee villages.

Phyllis Andersen: Lowell was also a breakthrough with its emphasis on the life of the worker and not of the mill owner.

Dona Brown: It really was — that was a significant change in the second half of the 20th century, in how our heritage is presented to us.

Phyllis Andersen: In your work with the Center for Research on Vermont, you've studied New England's long and complicated relationship with agriculture. Farmland preservation legislation notwithstanding, how does a state like Vermont, which certainly has a healthy tourist economy, deal with the potential landscape change that might come about as cultivated fields, pasturage, and farming itself diminish?

Dona Brown: It is an enormous concern among policy-makers. There have been conversations — more than half-joking — about how the state will still be able to keep the fields open on the interstates once the dairy industry has completely died out and put some black-and-white cows out there, and no one will know the difference. It's true that the tourist image of Vermont for many generations has depended on an open, bucolic landscape with 19th-century villages and black-and-white cows. I think that may no longer be the primary interest of tourists in the state. I think people today tend to see Vermont more as a forested place.

Phyllis Andersen: So, a focus on outdoor sports and activities?

Dona Brown: Yes. The state promoters have moved very heavily into promoting outdoor activities — biking, boating, hiking, skiing, golf. But the greatest threat isn't reforestration. It's suburbanization, and that's a threat to more than just tourism. It is a threat to landscapes and lifestyles that people in Vermont would like preserved as well. I'm also inclined to say we shouldn't sell short the resilience of New England's farmers. Vermont farmers in particular have always been one step away from disaster, and they've had to make some rough adjustments over the centuries. I think they may do it again.

Phyllis Andersen: Has your study of tourism in New England affected your own travels?

Dona Brown: I do think about these issues when I am a tourist. I like to think about what's being interpreted and how it's being interpreted for me. ■


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Covering the Issues

A river runs through it... Allston's about to change. And chances are — despite rumors — it won't involve re-routing the Charles River. In "Parallel Universities," *Harvard Magazine* (March–April 2005) offers a sneak peek into the university's expansion plans for the Boston side of the river. Will Allston become the Crimson's new center for biotech? The editors plant the seeds of this thought as they promote the University of California at San Francisco as a model for Harvard. UCSF's new 43-acre biomedical research campus at Mission Bay also sits among former warehouses and railyards on wetland bordered by highways and water, a fair distance from the current center of academic action. Apparently that project is a "win-win-win" for the city, developers, and the university (are there residents?) and construction is going gangbusters.

Speaking of campus planning... "Most universities seem to grow a million square feet a decade," says Lee Bollinger, president of Columbia University. That's roughly the equivalent of one Hancock Tower. For a snapshot of universities' thoughts on this building growth, check out "Campus Architecture" (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, special section B, March 25, 2005). A rather predictable series of topics includes the trials and tribulations of working with star architects, pitfalls of applying historical styles to large new buildings, sustainability, and preservation. The most interesting features are a sampling of collegiate buildings from 2004 and a related new online database. Searchable by building type, cost, square footage, or state, any designer, contractor, or institution is invited to add projects to the website. As of press time, 282 projects were listed: http://chronicle.com/indepth/architecture.

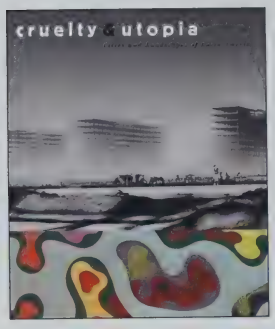
"Hygrid is the new Prius"... "Alternative energy has been the next big thing for the past 40 years," notes Daniel H. Pink in *Wired* (May 2005). In "The New Power Generation," he argues that the future is here and it is hygrid. Hy-what? A cousin to hybrid cars, "hygrid" combines mainstream utilities with individual off-the-grid installations (like solar panels) to provide a new approach toward power supply for buildings. Not only are the costs of these technologies dropping as their efficiency rises, but also legislation in 37 states now allows individuals to sell excess power back to utility companies. On sunny days you put power in the bank; on cloudy days you can plug in, potentially saving thousands annually and recouping the high start-up costs within five to six years. Developers and architects are taking notice.

Blue + Yellow =... What does it mean for graphic design to go green? Rebecca Bedrossian argues that the color alone or "photos of big pretty trees" or even soy-based inks on recycled cardstock won't cut it; the subject of the design itself must promote positive environmental and cultural change. She provides examples: most — like brochures for Rana Creek (a company specializing in green roofs) or Alameda County's Green Building Guidelines — are related to architecture and offer a glimpse into how graphic designers present the building industry. Check out *Communication Arts* (May/June 2005).

Not built in a day... "Recent events in St. Peter's Square, in Rome, have demonstrated, among other things, the virtues of a piazza," observes John Seabrook (*The New Yorker*, May 2, 2005). He continues, "Whether it serves as the site of an impromptu soccer game, a political demonstration, or a pilgrimage, a piazza must always function as a stage for acting out scenes from the drama of everyday life." But that doesn't mean piazzas always do, nor are they easy to create. Seabrook writes that if St. Peter's provides an example of excellence, Rome's Piazza Augusto Imperatore demonstrates all that can go wrong. This saga includes: a charismatic young mayor; an emperor's tomb; Mussolini, fascism, and the International Style; pre-construction archaeology; aborted public review; a stubborn architect; cranky city officials; and heroic civic structures intended to define an age. And Bostonians thought renovating City Hall Plaza was tough. At least we don't have to excavate to Year Zero. ■



Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA, teaches the architecture studios at Smith College.



CRUELTY & UTOPIA: CITIES AND LANDSCAPES OF LATIN AMERICA
Edited by Jean-François Lejeune
Princeton Architectural Press, 2005
Reviewed by Leland D. Cott FAIA

Based on a 2003 exhibition at the Brussels International Centre for Urbanism, Architecture and Landscape, *Cruelty & Utopia: Cities and Landscapes of Latin America* is among the best collection of essays on this subject that I have yet to see. Jean-François Lejeune, a professor at the University of Miami, has brought together a diverse group of authors to write about a variety of topics related to Latin American urbanism. Among the 20 essays are a translation — compliments of the University of Miami School of Architecture — of King Philip's 1573 *Law of the Indies* and a previously published piece by Mexican author Carlos Fuentes taken from his well-known book *The Buried Mirror: Reflections on Spain and the New World.*

Lejeune's own essay, "Dreams of Order: Utopia, Cruelty, and Modernity," provides a subtle roadmap to the main themes touched upon in the book: the notion of pre-Columbian space; the pervasive Spanish colonial domination; modernization in Latin America; the city as landscape; and finally, modernity, globalization, and cruelty. Other essays describe how the desire for modernity shaped the great cities of Latin America such as Buenos Aires, São Paulo, Mexico City, Caracas, Havana, Santiago, Rio de Janeiro, and Quito. Included throughout are examples of great works of architecture and landscape design by designers such as Lina Bo Bardi, Juan O'Gorman, Carlos Raúl Villanueva, Oscar Niemeyer, Luis Barragán, and Roberto Burle Marx.

Latin American Modernism has been on the minds of North Americans since Henry Russell Hitchcock's landmark 1955 exhibition and book, *Latin American Architecture Since 1945*, at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Now, 50 years later, this book attempts to put nearly 500 years of Latin American urban and architectural history into perspective. For the most part, Lejeune succeeds in doing so, but the lack of an introductory essay providing a strong connective thread for this diverse collection is a serious omission. Each essay is sufficiently broad to provide ample information for myriad publications, and the lack of such an introduction makes the subject matter so much more difficult to place in context, given the breadth of the material.

In spite of this, *Cruelty & Utopia* makes a major contribution to the field because it succeeds in describing the history of Latin American urbanism *and* situates the great Latin American Modernists in that tradition — which makes for a greater understanding of their genius. This is a very special collection of written material, accompanied by an extensive and equally important selection of photographs, maps, and drawings, many of which are in color, all of which will appeal to anyone interested in Latin American urbanism and design.

Leland D. Cott FAIA is a founding principal of Bruner/Cott & Associates in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and is an adjunct professor of urban design at the Harvard Graduate School of Design. He has taught design studios on Havana and most recently on Monterrey, Mexico.



NAKED AIRPORT: A CULTURAL HISTORY OF THE WORLD'S MOST REVOLUTIONARY STRUCTURE
by Alastair Gordon
Henry Holt and Company, 2004
Reviewed by Mark Ruckman

You have to feel sorry for Lloyd Wright. In 1929, the oldest son of Frank Lloyd Wright submitted an innovative design for an airport for the city of Los Angeles. Abandoning conventional airport design that relied heavily on historical precedents to evoke classical temples or 18th-century formal gardens, Wright's design reflected his knowledge of aviation and his desire to look to the future for inspiration. Although Wright received enthusiastic support from LA's Municipal Art Commission, the city's airport committee chose a more conventional plan. Wright tried again with an airport design for Burbank, California, and again his innovations were rejected. He eventually gave up and went back to designing homes for wealthy clients. It would be another 20 years before some of Wright's ideas were integrated into the design of airports.

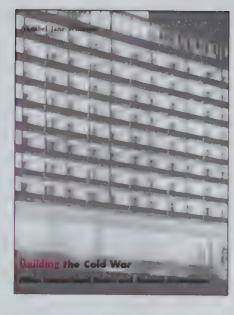
Alastair Gordon's fascinating and accessible survey of airport design traces the history of this 20th-century structure from Lindbergh's 1927 landing at Bourget in Paris to the end-of-century "shopping

mall with planes leaving from it." It's all here: the creation of civil airways in 1926; the creation of one of the first municipally owned airports in East Boston; Roosevelt's WPA airports; the development of new materials and technologies during World War II; the sexed-up ("Coffee, Tea or Me?"), Pucci-designed '60s; the advent of the jumbo jet in 1970; and the repetition of nightmare scenes on the evening news as airports became the new frontline for terrorists.

Each of these eras is marked by the efforts of architects and planners trying to respond to increasing air traffic, to anticipate future needs, and to confront the limits of architectural convention. What is striking about the evolution of airport design, particularly during the jet age, is that it allowed urban planners to begin to ignore city centers while creating gigantic, self-contained complexes. This trend reflected the direction that America was taking and a design profession unwilling or unable to reshape the political and cultural forces at work, perhaps best demonstrated in the planning of Idlewild/Kennedy airport. Despite inventive architects such as Walther Prokosh and Eero Saarinen, who were hired to design terminals at Idlewild/Kennedy in the 1960s, there were no provisions made for mass transit to connect passengers with two nearby New York City subway lines. The airport was designed for the automobile and the airplane: The one area designated for pedestrians, a 220-acre plaza, was demolished a few years after the airport opened and replaced with a parking lot.

Gordon's book reminds us how far we have traveled from the early fantasies of glamour and excitement that flying evoked to the caldrons of boredom and fear in the sky today. However unwittingly, airport designers have ushered in a high-speed future, changed our relationship with time, and made the world smaller.

[redacted]



BUILDING THE COLD WAR: HILTON INTERNATIONAL HOTELS AND MODERN ARCHITECTURE
by Annabel Jane Wharton
University of Chicago Press, 2001
Reviewed by Joan Wickersham

Remember the weaponry, both literal and ideological, of the Cold War? H-bombs. Radio Free Europe. Sputnik.

And Hilton International hotels.

That's right. Back in the 1950s, Hilton hotels were more than just places for overseas business travelers

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and tourists to get an air-conditioned good night's sleep. They were conceived, in deadly earnest, as crucial loci in the fight against the spread of Communism.

According to Conrad Hilton, "We mean these hotels as a challenge...to the way of life preached by the Communist world." Supported by the US government in the form of Marshall Plan funding, Hilton's strategy was to site hotels in cities perceived as particularly vulnerable to Communist influence; to foster goodwill toward America by infusing local economies with dollars and jobs; and to sell the desirability of the American lifestyle with such cushy amenities as ice water on tap, tennis courts, and cheeseburgers.

Annabel Jane Wharton's study of the Hilton phenomenon is heavily scholarly (words like "signification" and "autochthonus" occur with numbing frequency), but it's also fun to read. She catalogues the overseas Hiltons from the '50s and '60s — Istanbul, Cairo, Athens, Berlin, London, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Rome — detailing the political and economic nuances as well as the design and architectural impact of each building. Many of the hotels were designed by American architects in collaboration with local architects, engineers, and craftsmen — though, as Wharton points out, the indigenous touches were just that: touches, subsumed by a resolutely American Modernist aesthetic.

The buildings' arrogantly prominent siting within the old cities was often controversial. Architectural historian Vincent Scully deplored the Athens Hilton as "vandalism," regarding it as a desecration of the landscape, and a failure of custodianship on the part of the Greeks. In contrast, Wharton offers the story of the Florence Hilton, which was never built. Ironically, many native Florentines supported the project for its potential economic benefits; it was the city's rich expatriate residents who indignantly and successfully protested that the proposed hotel would destroy the "authenticity" of the landscape.

The postwar proliferation of Hilton hotels was also fueled by and partially responsible for the growth of tourism. Americans were traveling in unprecedented numbers, itching to experience foreign places — sort of. What they really craved, Wharton suggests, was a safe "McDonaldized" kind of travel: a chance to view the exotic from the vantage point of the familiar.

Conrad Hilton famously said of his hotels that each one was "a little America." This was true not only in the sense that the hotels functioned as architectural propaganda — but also because they allowed Americans abroad to feel that they had not really, after all, left home.

Joan Wickersham writes "The Lurker" column for this magazine.





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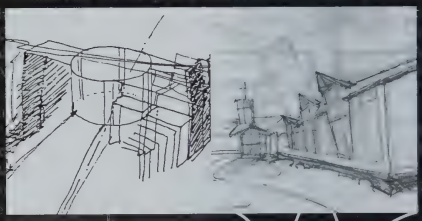
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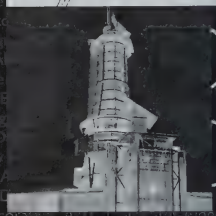
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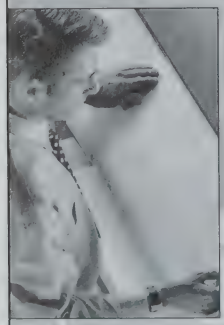




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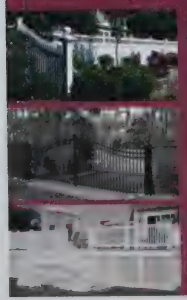
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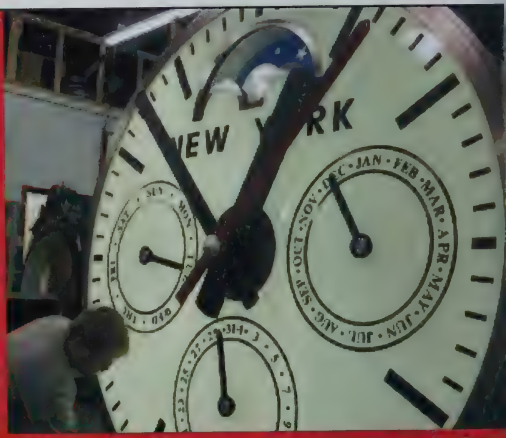
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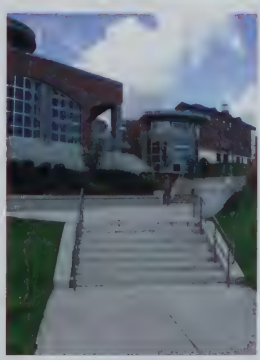


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The Homestead: Emily Dickinson Museum



I once tried to list all the addresses at which my husband and I have lived. The list was long, longer than I could believe, a record of odd jobs and graduate programs, plans pursued, abandoned, realized. After big moves across coasts and continents, we seem to have homed in on a place — or, to speak truer, to have had a place move in on us.

One of the things it means to make your home in New England is that you can never truly leave it afterward. "I have traveled extensively in Concord," boasted Thoreau, while Emerson, his neighbor down the road, wrote: "Our first journeys discover to us the indifference of places. I pack my trunk, embrace my friends, embark on the sea, and at last wake up in Naples, and there beside me is the stern fact, the sad self, unrelenting, identical that I fled from."

Emily Dickinson, who once said she thought "New Englandly," did not even travel extensively in her hometown of Amherst, finding it difficult during periods of nervous anxiety to walk across the street. In fact, except for a few trips to Cambridge and Washington, DC, and a 15-year period when the family lived mere blocks away (while her father repurchased and renovated the Dickinson family manse, in which she had been born), Dickinson traveled extensively only within one address: 280 Main Street.

I visited the Emily Dickinson Museum recently, after 20 years in New England, during which time the 60-mile distance between Williamstown and Amherst was apparently too great for me to traverse.

The Homestead is a grand brick house built in 1813 by Dickinson's paternal grandfather; next to it sits The Evergreens, the Italianate house her father built in the 1850s for her brother, Austin, and his wife, Susan, her closest friend. Mid-spring was dear to Dickinson. "Between the March and April line," Dickinson wrote, "That magical frontier/ Beyond which summer hesitates." On this April day, the place felt less magical than damp. The 50-yard expanse between the two houses was free of snow, but the sodden layer of leaf and needle mulch was as yet undisturbed by signs of green. A small sign by the cash register at the visitor's center warned us of a potent mold spore present at The Evergreens.

I stood with my daughter in the small room in which Dickinson traveled most extravagantly — the bedroom into which she brought her niece, turning the key in the lock behind them, then holding up the key to say: "Mattie, here's freedom." I hadn't expected the windows to be so generous — four of them, high and wide. And yet even as I noticed such details, I found myself increasingly less present to the place. I was not distracted so much as abstracted. This peculiar mindset felt true to Dickinson — in the rooms, but not of them.

Dickinson didn't simply dwell at 280 Main Street: she dwelled in the *idea* of dwelling. The poetry is heavy with the language of architecture. Her poems include mansions, abodes, floors, windows, thresholds, sills, corridors, parlors, roofs, beams, stairs, porticos, hearths, dungeons, basements, and tombs. There are planks and nails, gambrels and empaneled walls, the odd splinter, even a mortised joint and some soldering. There are chambers and doors and latches, many latches.

One poem epitomizes Dickinson's perverse occupation of and preoccupation with her house. The poem describes the soul in terms of a house that has survived the ordeal of its own building, eventually shedding its temporary superstructure to stand on its own: "adequate, erect."

"The Props assist the House," the poem begins, until "the Props withdraw" and the house can "support itself/ And cease to recollect/The Augur and the Carpenter." In the final two lines, "the perfected life" exists free and autonomous: "the scaffolds drop/ Affirming it a soul." As I walked through the place in which Dickinson wrote these extraordinary lines, I saw with new eyes the force of her metaphor. This house at 280 Main Street was the scaffolding; the house in the poem is the relentless poet herself, marked by the menial work of augur and carpenter but infinite enough to house "the Colossal substance of Immortality." ▪

Cassandra Cleghorn is a senior lecturer in English and American studies at Williams College. Her poetry has appeared in publications including *Paris Review*, *Yale Review*, and *Prairie Schooner*.



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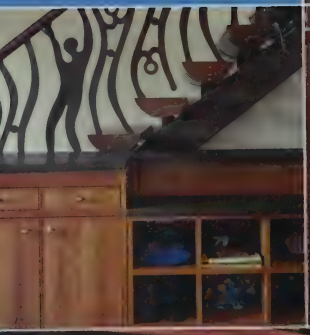


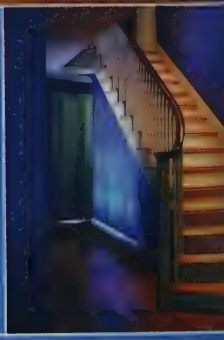
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Pink House Bay Window, 2003.
Oil on panel, 8 x 12 in.
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Brand Aid

A popular line of sunblock lotions made its place in consumer consciousness through a particularly cunning ploy: it spent no money on advertising. Whether the idea was the product of world-weary Madison Avenue cynics or up-and-coming "creatives" on the cutting edge of the self-referential "meta" trend, No-Ad clicked, especially with young people, who are at once most susceptible to and most calloused about the advertising culture. No-Ad somehow found a niche between cutesy beach names and the abyss of store-brand generics, implying a focus on the value of the product itself.

Just as it is nearly impossible to launch a consumer product without advertising, these days it is nearly impossible to discuss identity without a reference to branding. Discussions of branding are pervasive, serving simultaneously as the business consultant's strategy *du jour* and a shorthand reference to identity. Unfortunately, both incarnations avoid any meaningful consideration of the complex role of identity in our society and culture. And so, with this issue, *ArchitectureBoston* offers a No-Brand examination of identity in which all references to branding have been banned.

It's not been easy. Our roundtable discussion about the rumored emergence of a new "Boston School" — referring not to an academic institution but to a creative affinity — might have quickly degenerated to idle chatter about a new Boston brand. Instead, our participants wrestled with the implications of a shared identity and what constitutes a school. Rumors of a Boston School have been percolating recently in response to a growing perception of commonality among some practitioners (a school also calls to mind a band of similarly finned creatures swimming in the same direction). Less a style and more a sensibility, it is manifested in a restrained, elegant, humane neo-Modernism that is respectful of context and site and that uses materials in inventive ways. The result is a body of work that is perhaps best described by what it is not: It's not built therapy (à la Libeskind); it's not built theory (à la Eisenman); it's not built self-expression (à la Gehry); it's not a built joke (à la Johnson); it's not built violence (à la any of the Deconstructionists). And it is certainly not the latter-day Postmodernism that some Boston firms are still producing. What is most interesting — and this is what suggests a school and not merely a clique — is that there is evidence of this new sensibility in the work of established firms as well as newcomers.

The discussion of a school, which suggests a regional identity of sorts, offers the most obvious counterpoint to the "Elsewhere" theme of our last issue. But in fact, both of these issues were conceived as a continuing two-part discussion of the relationship between people and place. It is, of course, silly to imagine that a magazine could offer comprehensive insight into such a vast topic; "people, place" generates 172 million hits on Google, while "identity" generates over 87 million. But every day, news reports bring more evidence that the association between what we build and who we are resonates deeply in the human psyche. As the contributors to this issue indicate in different ways, the urge to invest our architecture with meaning runs strong; simply put, we want our buildings to say something. Our collective fascination with identity suggests that it is probably all too human to want them to talk about *us*. ■

Just as it is nearly impossible to launch a consumer product without advertising, these days it is nearly impossible to discuss identity without a reference to branding.

Elizabeth S. Padjen FAIA
Editor

editerranea, the newest kitchen in the Arclinea Collection, now on display at Arclinea Boston



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Arclinea

Here's a radical suggestion. Don't try to fix City Hall Plaza. Fill it in with new construction: a fine-grained, exciting project with a large residential component as well as plenty of commercial space. Leave a small plaza so that one can step back and see some of City Hall — the building really looks best, as Steve Rosenthal's photos show ["The New Order," May/June 2005], when you don't see all of it at one time. One successful example of a small plaza in front of an overbearing modernist "monster" is the lively Place Georges Pompidou (Place Beaubourg) in Paris, which is about a quarter the size of City Hall Plaza. There is no need to have a major civic space connected to City Hall. Siena's public plaza, which was meant to be the model for Boston's, does focus on its city hall with its wonderful tower, but other cities' great public spaces do not. The city halls of Venice, London, and Paris are not major buildings and are separate from their cities' great public gathering spaces; New York's gem of a city hall faces a minor park.

I propose that we keep our grandiose City Hall, make it a lot more friendly on the inside and less of a fortress on the outside, but scrap the Plaza. Who needs it? Let's get to work on creating some really fine urban spaces in the Greenway.

Jonathan Hale AIA
Watertown, Massachusetts

I was very surprised that none of the roundtable participants ["Creating Destinations," July/August 2005] brought up the recent proliferation of convention centers in the United States as the prime example of cities trying to create a destination.

Elected officials and urban planners across the country are building convention centers at a rapid rate because they believe it is an easy way to guarantee that several hundred thousand people a year will visit their city. Convention center feasibility studies are under way in every second- and third-tier city in the country — if shovels aren't already in the ground. But their plans are often misguided. Unfortunately, many of these investments will struggle or fail, much to the delight of convention center critics who hold up these cities as examples of why convention centers don't work. I would argue that it's not the convention center that failed; it's the attempt at creating a destination that failed.

The roundtable participants discussed the need for old and new layers and attractions that are real and part of the community. These concepts are precisely why Boston can be and is a premiere convention city and for that matter a destination. What we have always known in Boston is that the facility alone is only a piece of what draws convention and meeting planners. It is the mix of attractions, culture, history, entertainment, and business and professional demographics that already exist here, that makes a great convention city.

James E. Rooney
Massachusetts Convention Center Authority
Boston

This landscape architect read your roundtable discussion on creating destinations [July/August 2005] with great interest. Greater Boston's challenge is to make sense of the incredibly rich legacy of contributions it has made across all fields of endeavor (many of the region's hundreds of "firsts" are not just national, but global), but takes for granted, or worse, has forgotten about. Here we are in the IT age, in the "it" city, wondering if we have anything to say about ourselves, and to other destinations.

To paraphrase the old proverb, where there is no vision, and no memory, the people perish — or perhaps simply muddle their way into a different place. Places, like people, can suffer from their own kind of amnesia, anemia, and Alzheimer's.

We in the business of conceiving outdoor space know that a wink and a nod won't cut it anymore. To quote Boston-born Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., "Life is action and passion; therefore, it is required of a man that he should share the passion and action of the time, at peril of being judged not to have lived." Is open space simply the innocent bystander? Or isn't now the time and Boston the place for embracing something a bit more evocative of the passion and action that has made greater Boston great? Open space design and programming should evoke the actions and the actors — the firsts, the progenitors, the inspirations. There is a lot to be said, and a lot to learn, and it should not all happen indoors.

Thomas M. Paine ASLA
Brown, Richardson & Rowe
Boston

Your recent focus on the theme of "Elsewhere" [July/August 2005] stirred me to think about the related notion of "Here." As the topic of authenticity developed throughout the issue, I realized that this is the fundamental issue in the design dialogue that takes place in Boston. What is this place and how is it expressed architecturally?

Boston is a place where we continue to add strata of new buildings to the already layered city. Each building contributes to the public realm that, in turn, becomes the stage for our daily lives. The public realm, with its background tapestry of architecture, becomes our destination — the place where we walk, where we play, or where we simply observe. Each façade is a stage set that informs the actors as to how or what to perform. The daily routines of the inhabitants move by endlessly for the visitor, who has come to this particular destination to witness these events. We are the destination: people and buildings and streets and spaces.

Authenticity, for us, is that we live here — playing, learning, working. When we overlay the grand festivals of

life — marriage, birthdays, holidays — the effect is more potent. Add the broad social activities of politics, sports, arts, and the result is intoxicating. We have created the culture of Boston. The drama of our "here" is a compelling destination with rich layers of architecture, in the streets, parks, and squares, which provide us with distinct, authentic venues for expressing our Boston lives.

Alfred Wojciechowski AIA
CBT/Childs Bertman Tseckares
Boston

Somewhere deeply lodged in the genetic code is an urge to wander and explore elsewhere, a gnawing hunch that "elsewhere" (a sense or place of comfort) isn't here and now, but could exist in some other place at some other time and must be sought out, found, captured, and brought home. An in-born hunger for "hunter-ings" and "gatherer-ings" of place? Most folks also secretly harbor Walter Mitty-esque dreams of taking on exotic and adventuresome roles and playing out those roles in similarly exotic and unfamiliar places.

Never satisfied with the present, we oscillate between living in re-creations of an imagined past (which never existed) and/or inhabiting projections of a hoped-for future (which, ever-obedient servant of the Law of Unintended Consequences, does not arrive as imagined). At best, architects and planners study past and near-past places, learn from them, and inform new places with forward-looking vision based upon old wisdom and present-day means. At worst we make stuffed-and-mounted cartoon cut-out trophy caricatures of the past and service them with "up-to-date technology."

The fictional Adventurer Across the Eighth Dimension, Buckaroo Banzai, offers to all of us the stark Zen paradox: "Wherever you go, there you are."

Jeremy Scott Wood AIA
Weston, Massachusetts

We speak of authenticity as if it's a universal quality — elusive but greatly sought after, and achievable if we just use the right materials, proportions, and "intent." Architects have long measured their status by their ability to produce this condition, to only make "real" things, and looked down on what were deemed the artificial environments of popular culture. But in a multi-tasking world, places can now be simultaneously fictional and authentic, virtual and historic, or synthetic and hyper-real. In this sense, authenticity is like pornography — its meaning is in the eye of the beholder.

In practice, I'm not sure you can design authenticity — it's an emotional quality, the by-product of things or experiences we choose to give special value to. And it takes time, a factor outside the designer's purview. How many generations did it take for the green wall to become The Green Wall? And how many, if ever, will it take for us to associate this feeling with City Hall Plaza? The more powerful influence on place is narrative. Like other design values, its application is fully within our control. But it calls for a different measure of architectural success. If we can express the stories, emotional content, and information of places in our work, then many good things, including "authenticity," will follow.

If we don't like to think of cities as brands, consider the $150 million race among five world-class places to host the 2012 Summer Olympics. The challenge of destinations is not proving their authenticity, but in keeping their stories relevant to each new generation. If you want to join the experience economy, this is the new Holy Grail.

Gregory Beck AIA
New York City

Correction: The Tampa Bay Hotel, shown in a photo on page 40 of our July/August issue, is now the Henry B. Plant Museum at the University of Tampa, Tampa, Florida.

We want to hear from you. Letters may be e-mailed to epadjen@architects.org or sent to ArchitectureBoston, 52 Broad Street, Boston, MA 02109. Letters may be edited for clarity and length, and must include your name, address, and daytime telephone number. Length should not exceed 300 words.

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Density 2: Rethinking the Urban Village

Northeastern University
May 13 – 14, 2005

Local devotees of inclusive, sustainable places convened in May to demonstrate how a more tightly packed Boston might in fact be a desirable Boston, one that relieves pressure from the region's undeveloped outskirts by creating attractive communities on sites near existing infrastructure. "Density 2: Rethinking the Urban Village" was the sequel to the BSA's 2003 "Density Conference."

Architect-developer teams provided the basis for the two-day discussion by presenting a series of schemes for a hypothetical site, accommodating 3,000 housing units and other elements in financially realistic projects. Boston-area designers, public officials, and financiers joined practitioners from Charlottesville, Seattle, and Chicago to critique these proposals, examine societal trends that might herald increasing demand for such environments, and consider examples of above-average densities, such as in Seattle where two to five floors of housing are built atop each new grocery store.

Organizers accepted that their well-structured seminar did not allow enough time for dissecting or engaging community opposition toward density, yet an underdeveloped sensitivity to this issue might help explain its absence. An audience member's question about research on public attitudes elicited only references to decades-old book titles, and no one mentioned the unsettling dearth of research on the social benefits of mixed-income projects, which planners recommend broadly. Architects and planners need catharsis as much as anyone, but they must evolve beyond dismissive reductions — and one-sided judgments — of public preferences if they're to be leaders in more open-ended debates on community-building.

Kimberly Jones is a senior planner/project manager at Chan Krieger & Associates in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

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The exhibition is free, but appointments must be made in advance. Contact Melita Podesta at melita.v.podesta@bos.frb.org or 617.973.3197.

Andrea Ruedy, Assoc. AIA, is an intern architect at Goody Clancy in Boston.



Druker Lecture: Maya Lin

Boston Public Library
May 14, 2005



Wave Field, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1995.

Going to a Maya Lin lecture is a little like watching an episode of VH1's "Where Are They Now?" You knew her name, you loved her Vietnam Memorial, you celebrated her wunderkind success, but Where Is She Now? The Rabb Auditorium at the Boston Public Library was packed with not-very-architecty types, eager to find out.

Since her debut in 1981, Lin has been on a mission to escape public commodification. She was trained as an architect at Yale but has established herself as an artist. Over the years, she has dodged monument commissions (she is not a monument designer) and avoided architectural work (it's not the right scale, it's too logical, it's not intuitive). She thrives when she's told she can't do something, and has consequently turned out some surprising work that challenges traditional artistic boundaries.

Several of her large-scale earthworks recall the Great Serpent Mound, an ancient manmade topography in southern Ohio near her family's home. "Wave Field," at the University of Michigan, is a quarter-acre of grassy moguls whose arrangement was drawn from a textbook photograph of the Stokes Wave phenomenon. For an outdoor piece in Sweden, Lin drew a long, wiggly line in the patron's gravel driveway, snapped a photo, and built it as a continuous 3-foot-high earth pucker over 1,000 feet long.

Throughout her tenure, Lin has often collaborated with her brother, Tan Lin, a poet, to inspire and adorn her works with words, producing work such as a charming Lewis Carroll-like reading garden in front of the Cleveland Public Library. She also showed three residences in development, which are minimalist, orthogonal, and carefully detailed. The final project presented was an enormous "water table," for which she struggled over several months to find an appropriate quotation. Her epiphany: a single arty line, reminiscent of the Swedish driveway image, will be furrowed into the stone's surface — a sinewy scar in the polished face.

Is this the inchoate edgier Lin? Judging by her ease with her own intuition, whatever comes from her will certainly be elegant. This author hopes the work will gain greater intellectual acuity as well.

Rachel Levitt is a designer and writer.

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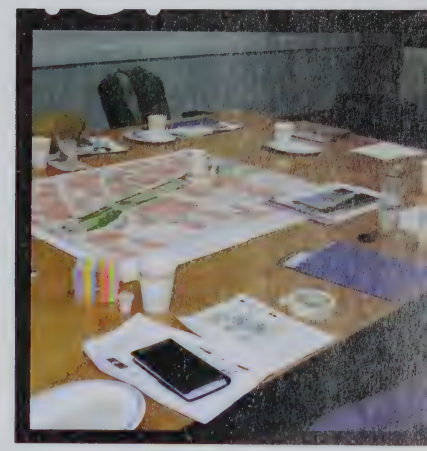


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Judging a Design Competition



The competition: A visitors' pavilion for the Boston Harbor Islands national park, to be sited on the city's new Rose Kennedy Greenway.

The jury room: A nondescript, low-ceilinged white room in Boston's Coast Guard building. Bagels. Doughnuts.

The jury: Three women, seven men. Many are local; others have flown in for the day. Architects, planners, a landscape architect, and public officials, including one from the National Park Service — the client on this project.

The day:

8:20 The chairman suggests taking a first pass through the entries, identifying the serious contenders. "Our job is to pick a first, second, and third, and then honorable mentions as we see fit."

8:25 The Park Service representative: "Ordinarily we choose a designer partly based on the ability to have a relationship — but this is a little different because it's blind. It's a leap of faith." She reminds people of some of the criteria for a successful design: "Functional, beautiful, and energy-efficient."

8:40 One juror comments, "This isn't an ideas competition. Whatever we pick needs to be buildable."

Someone answers, "I'd expect that everything we see today will be buildable."

The first smiles grimly. "Don't bet on it."

8:58 The jurors move to an adjoining room, deeper in the heart of the building and windowless, which adds to the feeling of secrecy. Design boards — 65 of them — lean against the walls. Carrying preliminary ballot sheets, the jurors split up, moving to different walls and corners to gaze at each entry. After a minute, a voice breaks the stillness: "I need coffee for this."

9:02 Utter silence. Some jurors stand; some are solemnly rolling from entry to entry on chairs they've wheeled in from the other room.

10:30 Colored Post-its are handed around: one color per juror, so they can each mark 10 nominees. There's no discussion of the designs — though there is a brief procedural debate. "Should we put the stickies on the front or the back of the boards?"

10:37 The jurors begin zig-zagging around, Post-its in hand, heading for their favorite entries. With its silent intensity and flashing pastel colors, the scene resembles a children's Easter-egg hunt.

10:50 Some entries have quickly accumulated multiple Post-its: several have four, one has five. One scheme occasions some humor. "No votes for this?"

"Hey, I'm going to the mat for that one."

Two jurors stand close together and, for the first time, someone voices an opinion, albeit quietly. "I have to say this is my personal favorite." He points at the one with five Post-its.

Another board, suddenly, has six.

10:55 The entries with multiple votes are ranged along a wall, and those with one Post-it are spread out nearby.

"OK," the chair suggests, "Let's articulate what we were looking for when we made our nominations."

"Form."

"Handicapped access."

"Something distinctive for the Greenway. If it looked like it could be a nice T-stop somewhere else, that was a negative."

"I eliminated those that seemed to want to completely redesign the park."

"I was drawn to the ones you could walk through in different ways."

One juror says, "I was looking for beautiful and memorable buildings." Pause. He shrugs. "Sorry."

There's one design that pleases everyone and thrills no one. They all agree it's safe: buildable and affordable. Someone asks, "Can you ever get away from the image of the modified bus shelter?"

11:00 Discussion begins of the heavy-hitters, entries that have attracted four or more Post-its. "Great interplay among the different elements and circulation."

"But it has an ugly broken roof."

"Can we make suggestions about how to improve these schemes?"

"Oh, that's so discouraging: 'We like it — *but.*'"

11:05 Next entry.

"I don't know. The whole masts-and-spires routine borders on the cliché for me."

"Too close in spirit to the stuff we've already seen at City Hall Plaza."

11:10 Next entry. Six Post-its. Lots of admiring murmurs.

One juror says, "This one was borderline for me, but hearing all this talk...." He sticks a Post-it onto the board.

"It was borderline for me too," another man says, stepping forward and ripping his Post-it off.

11:19 Next. Four Post-its.

"This was the most elegant of the glass pavilions."

"Flat-out gorgeous."

"But a flat glass roof? That's not going to happen."

"But if it could happen, it would be spectacular."

"I'm going to push the negative, just to keep the discussion going. The reflecting pool creates a barrier — it's a moat. And there's only one door. It's a display pavilion that you don't go into."

The chair reminds people not to go too far into details at this point. "We're not voting yet. Just pointing out the pluses and minuses of each."

The jury lingers in front of the board before moving on. "The technological advances in glass are unbelievable — it's not impossible to imagine you could pull off a structure like this. Glass has changed."

"But structures haven't."

11:25 Next. "It's a mish-mash, isn't it."

"Kind of a collage."

Silence.

Two jurors step forward and remove their Post-its.

11:27 Next. "Who knows what this material is?"

"Transparent concrete."

"Dirty glass."

11:29 More boards are discussed — some advance, and some are eliminated.

Comments about various projects: "This building doesn't know what it wants to be. There's a kind of corporate language here that says 'lobby' rather than 'harbor islands.'"

"Go to the Denver airport and you see this in spades."

"This is like the Calatrava building in Milwaukee. A moving building. Wow."

"With this one, access to the water and the ferry is confusing."

"This is singular — but one of my criteria is not looking like the New Jersey tolls. Does that bother anyone else?"

11:58 The contenders have been winnowed down to eight.

The chair suggests a lunch break. "Then we'll see if there are any passion votes to retrieve anything we threw away."

12:15 Sandwiches. A discussion. "How do we know the winning design will be buildable and affordable?"

"Yes, we have to guard against wishful thinking — you know, how would a great architect pull off the structure represented on the board?"

12:39 After considering whether there are any eliminated entries which ought to be reinstated — there aren't — the jury begins discussing the leading contenders. Even the widely admired come in for intense criticism, both aesthetic and technical.

1:31 A straw vote is taken, to see how close the jury is to consensus. Two schemes emerge as front-runners, each with five "first" votes; but others remain in serious contention.

"Well," says the chair, "what would cause you to change your minds?"

A chorus of voices, regarding several different projects. "More technical information."

"Knowing it could be done for the budget."

"If the roof changed."

"But," a juror says suddenly and fiercely, pointing at one of the boards, "no amount of redesign could help this one to move souls."

1:42 Momentum is building for the "flat-out gorgeous" glass box. But one juror is concerned that the reflecting pool might prove a safety hazard. Another points out that the renderings are treeless, although the site's environmental commitments stipulate retaining trees.

"Forty years of planning, this beautiful jewel about to be placed in this beautiful greenway — and you're asking me to sacrifice all that because the Park Service needs a place to put its *mops*?"

A third speaks up: "I would contend that the elegance and power of this scheme don't depend on the water or the trees."

2:10 Discussion continues of other schemes. There's one design that pleases everyone and thrills no one. They all agree it's safe: buildable and affordable. But someone asks, "Can you ever get away from the image of a modified bus shelter?"

2:15 A decision to look back through the rejected contenders to see if anything wonderful jumps out. Something does. A beautiful and original exterior, everyone agrees, though the core of the building is pretty standard.

2:32 Further discussion of the glass box. "It's risky and challenging — but isn't that what we want?"

"I'm afraid of the initial sticker shock."

"But you hire your architect here the way you always hire your architect — you say: 'This is the budget, now make it work.' Then they respond to that."

"Yeah, they can't just say, 'You chose this, now you find the money.'"

Another juror snorts: "*We* don't get to live on that planet."

3:02 One juror (not from the Park Service) expresses a last reservation about the glass box. "It's so transparent. Where does the Park Service put its stuff?"

Another juror stares back, shaking his head. "Forty years of planning, this beautiful jewel about to be placed in this beautiful greenway — and you're asking me to sacrifice all that because the Park Service needs a place to put its *mops*?"

3:12 The chairman passes out Post-its. "OK, this is our first real vote."

"The other vote wasn't real?"

"Nope. Just idle discussion."

This time the glass box is a clear first.

3:29 Generation of adjectives for the Park Service's press release. "Simple." "Elegant." "Flexible." "Shimmering."

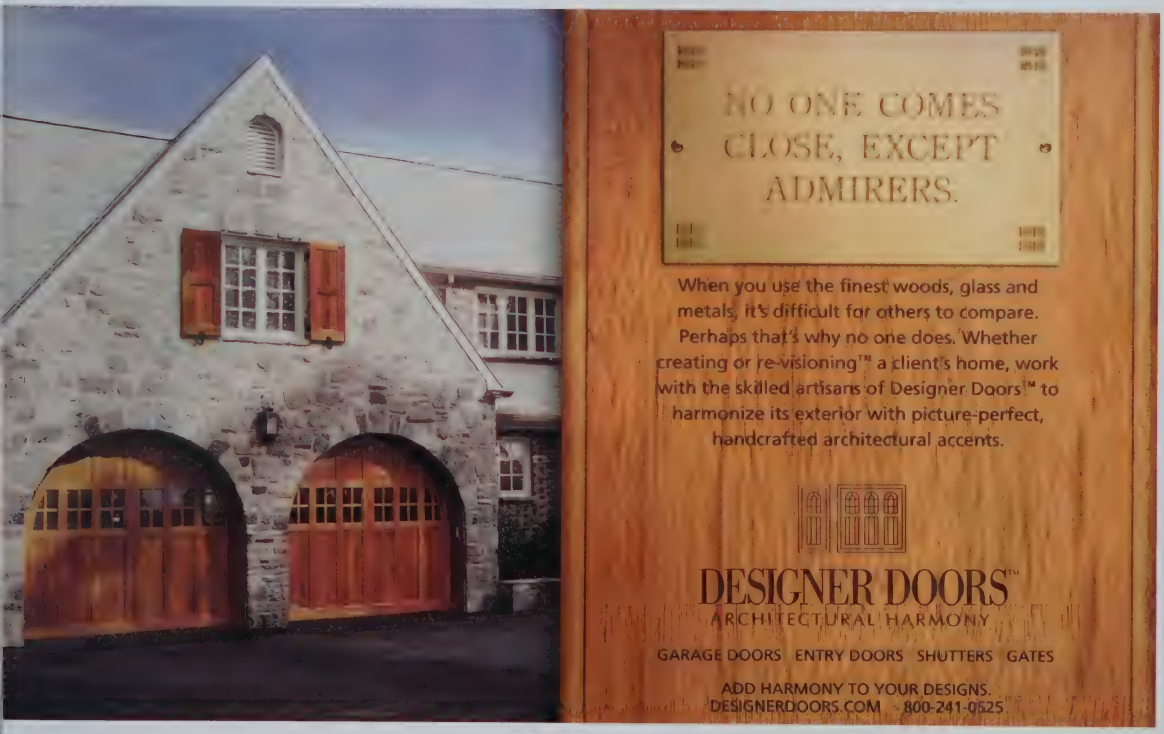
3:52 The envelopes are opened, and the names of the winners read aloud. A juror grins at one name. "Interesting. That's a young guy I've been trading messages with. He's applied for a job in my office."

4:10 Jurors crowd around the list of entrants. Several frown at the list and flip through the boards. "Uh-oh." They hurry off into the inner room, where the discarded entries, the ones that got no Post-its, are still stacked. "Someone you know?" a woman calls after them.

Their voices, half rueful, half laughing, drift back into the main jury room. "Uh-oh. Uh-oh." ■

Joan Wickersham lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She is the author of *The Paper Anniversary* and is finishing a new book.

The winning entries to the Harbor Park Pavilion Design Competition may be found at www.bostonislands.com/pavilion/pavilion_compete.html.



Boston's architectural scene has an undeniable energy that some observers attribute to the emergence of a new Boston School. Could they be right?

SCHOOL SPIRIT

PARTICIPANTS

Carol Burns AIA is a principal of Taylor & Burns Architects in Boston.

Stephen Chung AIA is a principal of Urbanica Inc. in Boston.

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Robert Miklos FAIA is a principal/studio director of Ann Beha Architects in Boston.

Elizabeth Padjen FAIA is editor of *ArchitectureBoston*.

Mark Pasnik is a writer, assistant professor at Wentworth Institute of Technology, and principal of over,under.

Charles Rose AIA is the principal of Charles Rose Architect Inc. in Somerville, Massachusetts.

Jane Weinzapfel FAIA is a principal of Leers Weinzapfel Associates in Boston and is vice president of the Boston Society of Architects.

Elizabeth Padjen: Boston's design community seems to be undergoing a metamorphosis of sorts. There is, of course, the natural evolution of new firms making their mark, but more than that, we're seeing hints of something I would describe as a confident edginess. Admittedly, that's not a phrase usually associated with Boston. But change is afoot, and it turns out that lots of people are having that conversation: something different is happening here. And some of them are floating the notion that what we are seeing is the emergence of something that might be called the Boston School.

The idea that there may be a Boston School of architecture is an interesting one. We hear references to what is sometimes called the Cambridge School — meaning, of course, not the institution by that name, but a loose coterie of architects in the '60s who generally shared values and ideologies and produced work that had a certain stylistic consistency that helped to shape the direction of architecture nationally. But there hasn't really been a sense of that kind of shared innovation associated with Boston architecture for some time. Some of you might think that this is all wrong, that the idea of a Boston School is ridiculous, and what we're seeing here in Boston simply mirrors what is happening in the profession nationally.

Robert Miklos: If there is a Boston school, I'm not sure it has a fully formed identity yet. But I do believe that there's a lot of new energy and new ideas here in emerging practices as well as in some practices that have been around for a while. I think there are some common approaches, values, and themes that work back and forth through our community, that aren't just about style. A few years ago, we could have characterized a school of architecture in Los Angeles that was about capturing a particular moment of our society, its chaos, its discord, and that was probably more typically identified with style. The things that join a lot of Boston practices are the values, the ethics, the process, and

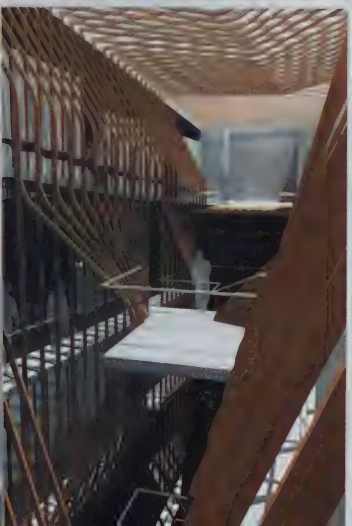


















the approach, rather than the result, the style, or the image. Those common values are beginning to influence how we all practice. There's an admiration in Boston for what each other does, and I think as practitioners we're open to learning from each other and sharing ideas; that's part of a tradition that probably comes from our academic roots. If there is anything characteristic about Boston architecture, I would say that it's not typically egocentric or self-referential. That might come out of our Yankee roots, even though most of us are not born New Englanders. I think our work is characterized by ideas and content, approach and process.

Elizabeth Padjen: Do you think that's more so here than other places?

Robert Miklos: I think there's a certain rigor to the way we approach design problems. There's a certain straightforwardness and practicality. There's an appreciation for simplicity and for elegant, direct solutions. We are great problem solvers.

Mark Pasnik: I would say that people in other regions tend to perceive a Boston identity more than we do, and for better or worse, it has something to do with respect for urbanism and respect for context. I worked for Machado and Silvetti for about 10 years, and on short-lists in places like California or Seoul, we would almost invariably find ourselves in the company of several other Boston firms. Clients seemed to feel they could find what they were looking for in Boston.

I'm intrigued by this idea about levels of commonality — there's some truth to it, but I also have reservations. There are a lot of emerging firms here that have very little tie to Boston in terms of their history or even the clients they work with. Many are associated with the universities, which attract people from all over the world. For example, I'm forming a practice with three colleagues. One is a London-born Canadian citizen. Another is Egyptian-born, but American-educated. Another is a Colombian-born Swiss citizen. And then I'm the Jersey boy in the group. Given the growing diversity here, I wonder if it's even possible to build a singular identity.

David Hacin: Identity is often born out of opportunity. And one of the interesting things about Boston is that there are two strains of firms here that have grown in response to different sets of opportunities to build. Those firms that work in their own backyard have struggled with issues of identity that are different from those that affect firms that are working on projects all over the world. It sets up an interesting dialogue. There is a dynamic tension between what's happening locally and what's happening globally, and the schools are the link because they attract people from all over the world. A lot of people who stay after they graduate have a global perspective. But they also need to understand a lot about the region and the city in order to be able to fully participate in the opportunities that exist here.

Robert Miklos: Mark's description of his firm resembles a lot of firms that have been established here over the years. It occurs to me that one of the strong values and great traditions of the Boston architectural community is collaboration — not just within our studios but also with other disciplines like planning and landscape.

Elizabeth Padjen: I suspect we are all starting to sound too self-congratulatory.

Charles Rose: Wouldn't it be lovely to have a Boston School? I came to this discussion hoping to be convinced of that. But for something to become a school, you have to create a body of work in a geographic region. That's certainly what characterizes the significant schools of painting — Hudson River, Ashcan. In Boston, we are great at exporting talent. Everyone at this table probably has done more projects outside the city than in the city. It's been a real frustration for many of the younger firms in Boston because, frankly, we can't fish successfully in this pond. Generally speaking, the people who want to build challenging buildings are not building them in Boston right now. It's a very conservative market.

Jane Weinzapfel: But is there something we have in common that we're exporting? Mark mentioned short-lists for projects in California or Seoul that were dominated by Boston firms. What are others seeing that we're exporting so well?

Charles Rose: Boston is seen as a design powerhouse; people bring in Boston firms for their intelligence, experience, and design sensibility. But many of the firms that are exporting are not getting much work here. I think that keeps us from creating a real school.

David Hacin: I think that's true in the institutional sphere, where Boston firms have a very strong reputation and dominate many markets across the country, only to find local projects going to out-of-towners. But I think there are other opportunities here; the residential market, for example, has been quite strong. You need to find the opportunities to experiment with cutting-edge ideas. Boston is and has always been a city of fabric architecture, not necessarily iconic, monumental architecture. It's what defines the city. But you don't need to be iconic to be cutting-edge.

Elizabeth Padjen: You mentioned opportunity earlier, and it strikes me as a significant aspect of how a school, or at least a regional identity, might be formed. For example, you might define vernacular architecture as the architecture of local opportunity — in terms of materials, climate, topography, and all those kinds of conditions that start to create an architecture that belongs to a particular place. Are there ways we can extend the metaphor of vernacular architecture to identify local influences and opportunities that somehow feed a Boston architecture?

Robert Miklos: Market forces might be one — the clients and specific building types that are peculiar to this area, such as historic buildings and cultural institutions.

David Hacin: I'd say community engagement is another. The public process in Boston is extremely sophisticated — many times very thoughtful, sometimes very frustrating. You need different skill sets working in that environment versus working in an institutional or corporate environment. And at some level, perhaps those skills shape a common identity.

Charles Rose: I still have a very difficult time looking at what's been built and feeling that it somehow meets the criteria to be a school. Where are the big ideas that are linking this all together? In the days of The Architects Collaborative, clients invested in an enclave of TAC-designed houses in the inner 'burbs. That was, perhaps, a school — there was capital that was connected with a set of ideas and it produced something new. I think a school has to be noteworthy for some reason. Has that really happened here? It seems to me that the money that is spent on construction here is fractured; it is not invested toward a common goal, and as a result, the design responses are sometimes good, sometimes bad, but separate and not really cohesive.

Mark Pasnik: It's an interesting point. At that time, there was an alignment between the values that the new school wanted to create or perpetuate and the values of the clients who sponsored that work. I don't think that alignment exists at all today in Boston. And that's why a lot of the edgier talent is seeking out work elsewhere. You could compare it to a place like Los Angeles, or even better, the Netherlands, where there seems to be a real alignment of the values of the architects and what they want to build with the values of the community and what it wants and aspires to. And I think that's the alignment necessary for a school to succeed in its own home town. I'm not sure that's going to happen here.

Charles Rose: If you look at places that have had strong identifiable schools, the people who are in the commissioning role are remarkably optimistic about design and its potential to create an environment. I actually believe that Boston may be approaching a turning point; I think there is more optimism about design. I think we're seeing an easing of conservative values that is more open to possibility and to new terrain in design.

Carol Burns: Shared values between architects and commissioning agents might produce commonality in identity in the next generation of Boston architects. Perhaps the value of this conversation is simply recognition of some potential for a future school. However, no such school exists now.

Elizabeth Padjen: It seems to me, though, that a disconnect between what firms are capable of doing and what the local commissioning agents are looking for is not necessarily the issue we might think it is. Falling back on the example of painting schools, the Cape Ann school of painters did not necessarily sell all of their paintings on Cape Ann. The product does not necessarily need to be consumed in the place in which it is made in order for us to perceive some kind of coherent identity. That will always be the case in Boston, because of geographical realities. I think of firms like Jane's as part of the vanguard of an emerging school. Early on, Leers Weinzapfel adopted a different way of looking at this place, which in turn influenced the work they did elsewhere. And they've been around long enough now that they have traction and have in effect graduated other architects from the firm who have gone out on their own, taking with them some of those values and some of that way of looking at this place. I cannot imagine Leers Weinzapfel as an LA firm.

Jane Weinzapfel: I think Boston architects are very lucky in that we have this incredible physical context. You can have a dialogue with it or you can push against it. It's very strong and robust. And it allows us to think of how we can work in the present with today's materials and today's ideas and still have an interaction with the past — the magnificent fabric of the city. It's strong enough to

"If you look at places that have had strong identifiable schools, the people who are in the commissioning role are remarkably optimistic about design and its potential to create an environment." — Charles Rose AIA

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— Carol Burns AIA

stand up to it. Our firm used to think of the design process as a conversation between building presences, our building being the most recent member of a pre-existing group. That metaphor evolved a bit, toward imagining that the building listens in on the conversation and finds its own distinct voice, offers new directions, and becomes an ensemble player. Ensemble players who perform together, coordinating complementary parts, settle into a group identity even as they are recognized individually.

Elizabeth Padjen: That's an apparently subtle shift, but I think it reflects the larger sense of change in the city that I alluded to when we began. One could say that Boston architects have been trying to figure out how to deal with this fabric for the last 50 years. For a long time — certainly the last quarter of the 20th century — we were completely deferential. Now, it seems that we're starting to realize that we can push back in ways that are inventive and at the same time respectful.

David Hacin: I think that's exactly correct. The city is also more secure about what it is. There was a long period of time when the city's identity was, in so many people's minds, under siege. Now it is renewing itself again and moving forward. It can be more assertive.

Stephen Chung: And in that process, some things have changed in the economy of the city that may have created some shared experiences for practitioners — maybe this is another of those influences that shape an identity. For me, starting a practice during the Internet bubble gave rise to all kinds of possibilities. Typically, the clients were very young and, at that time, very well off. For a few years, we built lots of interesting projects; it was an example of market forces and the people behind them combining to promote new ideas and to create architectural opportunities.

When the Internet bubble popped, things changed. The opportunities didn't necessarily end, but they shifted — away from the more speculative, maybe even hedonistic, types of projects to more normative residential work. Even with the economy waning, the residential market remained very strong. And even though Boston is a dense city, there were a surprising number of opportunities to build new residential buildings. I'm not sure that we need to identify a certain shared style, or even an approach. But it seems that many of the younger firms that I know have had similar types of experiences.

Robert Miklos: I think emerging Boston practices are characterized by a certain intelligence, resourcefulness, and adaptability that can make strong projects out of any conditions that affect the building process. If there's any place in the United States that's difficult in terms of process, it's Boston. We have learned to navigate through complex institutions, strong personalities, a daunting public process, and still have the project emerge with a strong design with great integrity. Maybe that's one of the greatest traits that we export. It's not a preconceived notion of image. Most of us practice in such a way that the project derives from the place, the interaction with the client, and the circumstances.

Elizabeth Padjen: Let's explore that a bit — it seems to me that architects practicing in Oklahoma probably also say that their work responds to place and interaction with the client. The same language appears in everyone's brochures. Does it mean something different here?

Carol Burns: Jane's notions of ensembles are resonant for me: the sense that there's already a conversation going on and that a new building contributes to and affects the dialogue. This approach to architecture is not separate from the issues of process that Bob alluded to earlier. To build in Boston, we learn a special patience. If there's something that distinguishes Boston architects, it might be that carefulness about issues of place is fostered here, then exported elsewhere. A client on the West Coast might put three Boston architects on a short-list because they represent something — not style, but let's say sensibility — about contending with complex existing conditions that are physical as well as political, economic, and social. I'm not sure that architects in Oklahoma who say that their buildings respond to their place bring the same preparedness.

Charles Rose: So we have some shared experiences, some shared sensibilities. I don't understand how this constitutes a school. And can you really have a school and say it's not stylistic? I'm not sure about that. Every historical school I can think of has been stylistic. I believe there are hints of some stylistic borrowing among certain practices in Boston. I don't think we can be only a school of process, unless our process is creating something fantastic. Frank Gehry and the West Coasters created a school driven by a lot of process, which produced different results. Our process is sounding like a marketing brochure to me. There is a lot of truth in what's been said — we all get on these short-lists because we are good at solving problems. But again, I'm not sure it adds up to a school yet.

Stephen Chung: We also have to recognize that the conscientiousness of Boston architects sometimes results in the label of being "safe." When clients want something special, they don't necessarily look for "safe."

David Hacin: I would contrast that sort of conscientiousness with another global trend in architecture, probably most explicitly articulated by Rem Koolhaas, which is one in which context does





not play a role. It is a very forceful argument that stands distinct from what we're talking about around this table. And that does set Boston architects — or perhaps most American architects — apart.

Carol Burns: There are different kinds of context. Some architects work in the context of their own developing oeuvre, trying to create the next best museum to trump the last one, in the context of their own developing style. That's the context for many of the designers who are flown around the world to bring in a signature piece.

For other architects, context is the history book: they want to make something that will contribute to thought or be part of the tradition of the development of modern architecture or just get published. Rem is provocative and wants, I think, to make sure we understand that the context that he's trying to put his work into is a cynicism about the marketplace.

Perhaps it's old hat for architects to focus on the physical context. Nevertheless, the physical world is the place where we live our lives.

Elizabeth Padjen: And maybe whatever shared identity Boston architects have is less a question of school or style and more a question of sensibility. Boston architects, by and large, do believe in the physical context. Maybe it starts with something as basic as that.

Mark Pasnik: My reservation about making place the fundamental consideration in identity is that it drops a lot of the other traditional forms of identity that might also be important — racial, ethnic, sexual, economic, political, social class, cultural, regional, national. Maybe there is no single school here, but many; there's a lot of work going on that is exploring different types of identities in different contexts. Maybe it's a good thing that we can't all work in Boston, that we're actually forced to do things in other cities, because it encourages more of this exploration.

Robert Miklos: It might be an interesting exercise to try and identify the formal characteristics that bind the work of some of the cutting-edge Boston firms. For example, there is a great tradition of craft and of expressing material. There is an affinity or preoccupation with elevating buildings of utility — sheds, shacks, barns — to a different art form.

Charles Rose: There is a special attention to tectonics — the expression of structure and material and detail.

Robert Miklos: Some of that comes from the presence of some outstanding faculty members at the local schools. I'd say Rafael Moneo at Harvard in particular has influenced a whole new generation that cares about tectonic expression and is making it part of the restrained Modernism that seems to characterize a lot of the new work in Boston.

Carol Burns: There is interdisciplinarity — somewhat related to the collaboration issue that was touched on earlier — especially among architects who are interested in an allegiance with landscape design. But there also seems to be a growing interest in opportunities for collaboration with mechanical engineering designers, in terms of issues of sustainability.

Mark Pasnik: I wondered whether somebody would bring up sustainability — mostly because I'm curious why Boston isn't a leader in this. We're in proximity to great research institutions. The lead architect for the Genzyme building [Behnisch, Behnisch & Partner] is from Europe, and you see cooperation all across the EU. Why can't we collaborate from one side of the river to the other?

Charles Rose: I feel like a curmudgeon here, but LEED and sustainability are everywhere. The US government demands LEED, as do most institutions. But it is interesting to think back to the time when solar energy was really avant-garde. MIT was building experimental solar houses. There was real excitement generated by one of our local institutions, and it had an effect throughout the region; it would be exciting if we could somehow maintain an innovative edge. Certainly some of the best engineers are here. The same goes for landscape. We have some of the most talented landscape architects in the country here. It's easy to get them on board with your projects.

Jane Weinzapfel: Materials research is one source of innovation and another example of local resources that we could work with more closely. Our firm, for example, has been fortunate to be able to develop materials in the course of project design that eventually became products.

Carol Burns: Is that another factor that distinguishes Boston architects? Architects here do carry out research — although they barely have the time and money to get it done, much less generalize, write it up properly, and disseminate it.

Charles Rose: The idea that we would be the home of inventive thinking, not only around design but also around the actual making and materiality of a building, would be a great goal. Another ingredient of a school, historically, was that the members would cross-pollinate.

Jane Weinzapfel: Painting schools also often enjoyed dynamic rivalries; I always like to think of the word "rivalry" as hovering with potential between "striving" and "strife." To be able to call in colleagues and have them critique your work in a pointed, good way is terrifically useful and something that we're already doing in some fashion. The BSA's "Conversations" series is another forum for lively critique. We should encourage more of that as a shared propulsion system.

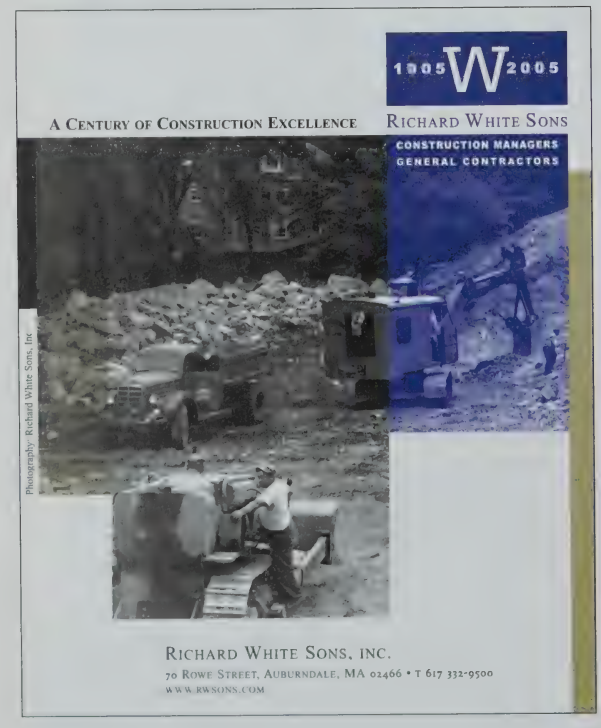
David Hacin: One of my concerns about Boston is that it's very cynical. We are very quick to criticize ourselves, to complain about this condition or that condition. We really have to conquer that in order to come together in a meaningful way and set up the conditions that would allow a Boston school to emerge. That's a problem not just in architecture; that's a problem across the board. Maybe it's because we live in the shadow of New York.

Charles Rose: In New York, Mayor Bloomberg instituted the Design Excellence Program. Designers submitted their portfolios, and the city selected 24 firms to receive all the commissions from the city's Department of Design and Construction for the next three or four years. We're one of the firms on the list. In essence, New York has decided that it's going to promote 24 younger firms. It's giving them a huge amount of work with good budgets and a tremendous amount of support from city agencies. It makes you wonder if something like that could happen here, and how different Boston would feel if not all the big commissions went to the large, well-established firms. It could engender some really interesting work within the city.

David Hacin: I think the public is ready for that, too.

Elizabeth Padjen: Why do you think the public is ready? What's different now?

David Hacin: I think what should be preserved has been preserved, in large measure. And the city is trying to figure out what its identity is, in the wake of the dot-com crash. Now the city is identifying itself as a biotech center, a medical center, a city that is forward-thinking in terms of its industry and





technology. And that needs to translate somehow into the built environment. That's why, at the level of city officials on down to the public, there is some sense that Boston is emerging as a new kind of city, that there is a "New Boston" coming that needs to be expressed. I think the South Boston waterfront, with the ICA [Institute of Contemporary Art] and the convention center, is beginning to suggest what that might be. That's why I'm such a soldier against cynicism, because I think there is great opportunity and we have to be out there as a profession advocating for it.

Stephen Chung: In our practice, we couldn't wait for opportunities to just come along. I decided that I had to find a way to be more proactive, so I formed an alliance with a developer and, together, we have been able to go after projects proactively. I don't know if that type of arrangement has any relevance to a new Boston School — but it is one example of a new way of working. I think there is evidence of other emerging firms developing other innovative ways of practicing here.

David Hacin: The fact that the city selected your team for the police-station project in the South End, over a lot of firms that took a much more traditional approach in a very conservative neighborhood, speaks to the desire of the city to promote that kind of design. The announcement made me optimistic that at the civic level there is an awareness that we need to be advancing this discussion.

Mark Pasnik: I'm actually more cynical. If the public were ready for this, then we would see a lot more of it. It's because of architects creating unusual situations like this that we're starting to see some of this work. And it's because of certain institutions that are more ready for it than the general public. One of the things people identify with Boston is education, and we certainly have a lot of architecture schools and programs. Why aren't we educators teaching and encouraging the public to be more receptive to this sort of thing? At Wentworth, which is a pretty small force in the city, we're trying to engage locally with the Fenway community and develop some relationships there. I know Northeastern's doing the same thing. We're making an effort to get out there in the community in order to try, from the ground up, to have some influence.

Stephen Chung: I think you should be more optimistic. Look at the South End and South Boston. There are a lot of young architects doing interesting projects — Utile, Office dA, Doug Dolezal, Davin Hacin — and those are areas that have been less receptive to new things in the past. When the developers see that the projects are successful, they will continue to tap these architects.

Charles Rose: The problem is that Boston has had bad experiences — the West End, Charles River Park. And so, unfortunately, there is some literal and figurative scarring that is sometimes hard to overcome. But I agree that there's reason for optimism — the South End points to that. I like the idea that we're at a turning point. ■

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Behind the FAÇADE

Paintings by Jessica Rohrer

You don't get to pick your relatives, and you don't get to pick the homes that shape your life: the Victorian where you grew up, your best friend's ranch house, your grandparents' apartment, that Gothic college dorm. Even adults sometimes seem surprised by their own choice of dwelling; property values, rents, transportation, and proximity to schools or work often conspire in the logic of a choice. HGTV aside, if you're into self-expression, clothing is a better medium than real estate.

And yet there is a tangled relationship between our dwellings and our *selves*. These are the places that are the containers of our most intimate memories. These are the places that define our "somedays": someday, I'll live in a place just like this; someday, I will get out of here.

The painter Jessica Rohrer explores that relationship in her series of portraits that capture every place she has ever occupied. Like a trail of bread crumbs, these paintings lead back through a life: a career in New York; studies at Northwestern, the Art Institute of Chicago, Yale; a childhood in Wisconsin. In our increasingly peripatetic society, a list of addresses is every bit as unique an identifier as a fingerprint or DNA.

We can't know the memories that these portraits conjure for their maker; in that sense, they are truly façades, walls that conceal the lives beyond. But they do allow us to project our own memories and associations, and in that sense they suggest an architectural history of America that is more personal and more real than any presented in a textbook.

— *Elizabeth S. Padjen FAIA*

"Monitor Street," an exhibition of paintings by Jessica Rohrer, will be on view from November 17 to December 23, 2005, at P-P-O-W Gallery, 555 W 25th Street, New York.



Pink House, New Haven, Connecticut, 2001. Oil on panel, 11 x 12 in.



Apartment, Brooklyn, New York, 2002. Oil on panel, 15¾ x 10 in.





Top: Modern House (Side View), Kewaskum, Wisconsin, 2002. Oil on panel, 11¼ x 21½ in.
Bottom: Dorm, Evanston, Illinois, 2002. Oil on panel, 15½ x 31½ in.



Yellow House, Kewaskum, Wisconsin, 2001. Oil on panel, 9 x 13 in.



Top: Untitled (Monitor Street Series), 2003. Oil on panel, 20 x 49 in.
Bottom: Untitled (Monitor Street Series), 2004. Oil on panel, 20 x 33 in.



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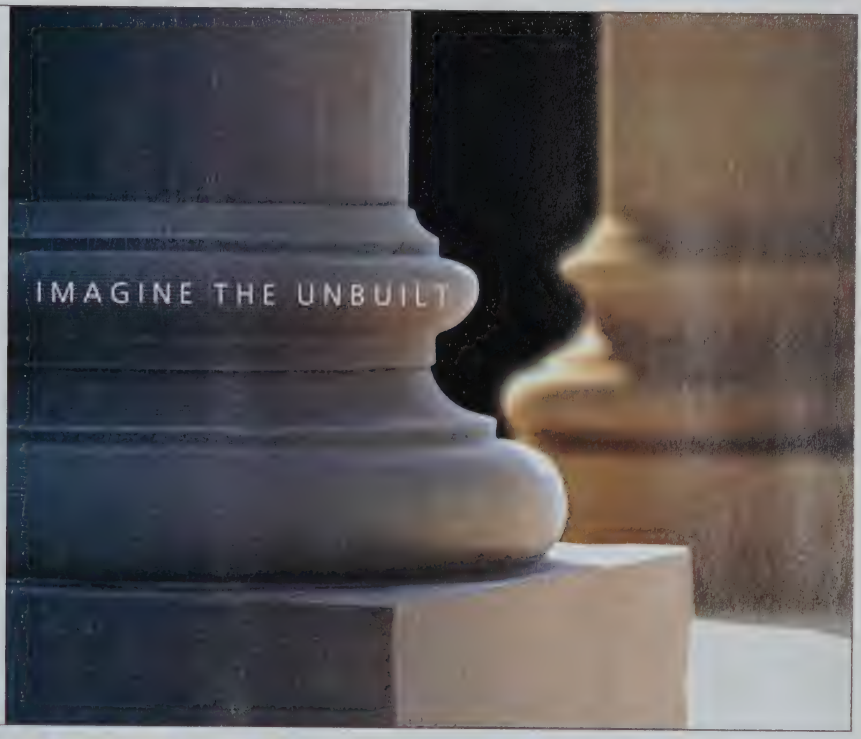
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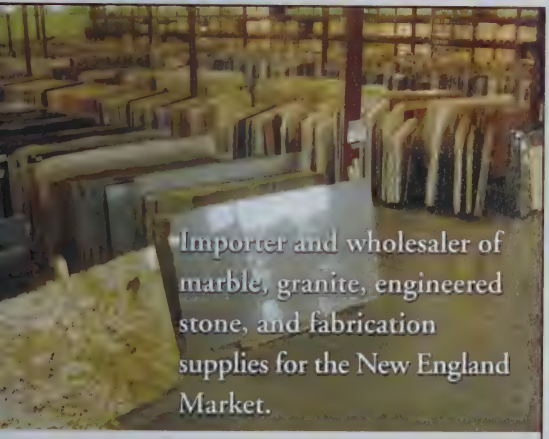
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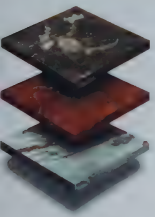
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ARCHITECTURE TO DIE FOR

When is a building more than a building? **By Hubert Murray AIA**

For those in search of Donald Trump's inner philosopher, the moment of revelation may have come. In proposing that the twin towers of the World Trade Center should be rebuilt as a replica of the original (plus one story) the self-seeking blond mogul seems to have offered an insight into our cultural identity that none of the other protagonists involved in the rebuilding seems to have cottoned onto.

In making his proposal, Trump has shown that he alone has understood the mythical power that was invested in the sibling skyscrapers by the demonic bin Laden. Prior to 9/11, Yamasaki's towers were never accorded much recognition other than as landmark or viewpoint, depending on where you were (looking at or looking out). After 9/11, however, images of the towering inferno and twisted wreckage have been seared into our collective consciousness, embracing in their representation the bundle of myths that bind us together as a country: the nobility of workers building their "ordinary American" lives within that citadel of capitalism; the heroism of New York's Finest; and the steely resolve that sought restitution for the dastardly attack on Pearl Harbor. Just as the power of the WTC as national icon was created by bin Laden, not Yamasaki, so, arguably, this mythical power cannot be supplanted by Libeskind, Childs, or anyone else on the dream team of architects and engineers who seek to rebuild and memorialize on this vast and lofty scale.

To what extent then are icons of cultural identity born, *ab initio,* from the mind of the architect, and to what extent do they achieve that status or have that greatness thrust upon them? To ask the question another way, to what degree can architecture imbue in a building its strength as cultural icon? Or is such strength derived from context, circumstance, and the spirit of the times, the architecture merely coincidental?

The World Trade Center is not alone among buildings for having attained mythic status through violent attack. Examples abound, particularly religious ones: the 2001 destruction of the Buddhist Statues of Bamiyan in Afghanistan identified, at least to foreigners, the oppression of a community at odds with its Taliban rulers. The 1984 storming of the Golden Temple at

Opposite: Golden Temple, Amritsar, India.



Above: Rynek Market Square, Warsaw, Poland.

Amritsar, the holiest shrine of the Sikhs, inspired members of that religion to assassinate Prime Minister Indira Ghandi, who had given the orders for this assault on the identifying sanctuary of their community.

There are also secular examples. Warsaw, utterly destroyed by the German occupation in World War II, from 1945 rebuilt its historic center in facsimile from the paintings of Canaletto, as meticulous a documentation as one could wish for. As an assertion of cultural identity, this museum-like restoration of the heart of the city gained its strength as a repudiation of Nazi destruction. In its reference to an 18th-century Italian as the (albeit unknowing) guardian of their heritage, it was also a reminder to the Soviets that Poles are children of the European Enlightenment, not of the Slavic East.

Dresden, the so-called Florence on the Elbe, has suffered in the last 50 years the annihilating destruction of Allied bombing in 1945, the punitive neglect of the workers' paradise through 1989 and, as an almost trivial afterthought, the devastating floods of 2002. Through it all, the high church of Protestantism, the Frauenkirche, has undergone an iconic metamorphosis from dignified skeleton among the ruins, to memorial of neglect reproaching those still under the influence of the people's opiate, through its most recent manifestation, fully restored, as a phoenix rising from the ashes of war and godlessness. Gottfried Semper's Opera House, thrice built and thrice destroyed, the last time by flood, is being meticulously restored for the city's 800th anniversary in 2006. One religious, the other secular, each a remarkable work of architecture in its own right, these buildings have assumed a stature in the community beyond their creators' imaginations.

The National Library in Sarajevo, long a repository of religious and intellectual culture from the three monotheistic traditions, was shelled by the Serbs in 1992. The building itself, no more than a hundred years old, became an instant symbol to Bosnians and to the world of the centuries of cultural and social pluralism that stood as the antithesis to the sectarian nationalism with which it had been pummeled.

Then there are those exceptional buildings that, while avoiding the cauterizing passage to iconic status through violent assault, have been recognized as cultural symbols from the beginning. The strictly architectural examples are rare however. In his essay on the Eiffel Tower, Roland Barthes declares that "architecture is always dream and function, expression of a utopia and instrument of a convenience." It is striking how many of the buildings that are "born iconic" are strong on utopian dream (many of them religious) and weak on function. As Barthes notes, the Eiffel Tower itself, the symbol of Paris (if not of France), is most significant in its uselessness. It is the dreams that the Tower generates — in an industrial nation at the peak of its imperial power — that imbue it with its iconic strength. The immateriality of form, the antigravitational thrust, the conquest of space, and the promise of modernity are utopian fantasies with infinitely more power than any banal function that might be attributed to the structure as viewing platform, radio tower, or weather station. The very secularity of the structure bestows its enduring significance as a symbol of the Enlightenment.

Another case of a powerful identifier bereft of material function is the Voortrekker Monument in South Africa. High on a hilltop south of Pretoria, this 40-meter granite cube commemorates the Great Trek of the Afrikaaners from the Cape to the Transvaal in the 1830s. More than a monument to an event, however, this shrine to Afrikaanerdom purportedly represents the triumph and determination of God's chosen people (their Calvinist selves) over the oppression of the imperialists (the British) and the forces of barbarism (the Xhosa, Zulus, and other African peoples). Erected at the time of fascist domination in Europe and completed in the year of the Nationalist Party ascendance to power in South Africa (1948), this monument to white supremacy, of questionable artistic merit even then, was at the peak of its iconic strength. While it has physically survived the transition to democracy, however, this vast and trunkless block of stone stands abandoned, its meaning nullified by universal suffrage.

A contrary case can be made for bridges. For the most part decidedly un-useless, bridges are often cited as cultural icons signifying place and, sometimes, community. The Golden Gate Bridge and Sydney Harbor Bridge are inseparable from their cities and topographies. The Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma and the Mostar Bridge in Bosnia are inseparable from their histories.

But bridges, however functional, are the stuff of fantasy. Tunnels do not have that cachet. A possible exception — at least until recent events — was the London Underground,

To what extent are icons of cultural identity born, *ab initio*, from the mind of the architect, and to what extent do they achieve that status or have that greatness thrust upon them?

which in the minds of Londoners of a certain age represented the safe haven that it became during the Blitz of 1940. Henry Moore's sketches of mothers and children asleep in each others' arms on platforms and within the tunnels themselves invested this stinking and dysfunctional infrastructure with a numinous quality that may now be gone forever.

In this period of nomadic voyeurism, it is important to distinguish between the icons of consumption tourism (the Taj Mahal, the Pyramids) that are simply items on a checklist of the visiting foreigner and those buildings that have served to define and to give identity to their native populations. To the international art set for instance, the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao is celebrated as one more brilliant product in a constellation of such cultural destinations.





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For those wishing to revive their cities, the "Gehry object" is as reproducible as any work of art in an age of mechanical production. For the Basques, however, the building derives its strength uniquely from its place and political context. The anarchy of form, though striking in itself, attains its fullest meaning when viewed as a reflection of Basque resistance to the central authority of Madrid and 60 years of fascism. Considered in this way, Gehry's inspired creation is not a fungible commodity that can be traded in New York and Los Angeles with indifference.

Infinite reproduction does not necessarily dilute the power of the symbol. The Parthenon is unique in its site and in its expression of the Doric. It has been reproduced in generic form wherever the institutions of Graeco-Latin culture prevail. Far from diminishing the authority of the original, however, the latter-day facsimiles found even in their meanest form in the portals of a bank or a high school serve to fortify the meaning of the original and the Athenian humanism for which it stands. Paradoxically, the Parthenon Marbles, the contested sculptures that constituted the frieze and metope of the temple that were "rescued" by Lord Elgin and taken to the British Museum, have become for Greece a more eloquent national symbol in their very absence.

Do any of Boston's buildings repay examination in this way? Is there an architecture in this city that embodies the collective consciousness of Bostonians, that gives the city its identity? Russell Banks once cleverly remarked that the vernacular architecture of farms and villages is to New England as reggae is to Jamaica. Or, one might add, as red brick is to Boston. Try as one might, it is hard to say whether the icons of democracy such as the State House and City Hall, or the places of worship such as Trinity Church and Old North Church have any more stature in the public mind than, say, Fenway Park or the Citgo Sign.

Whereas the seats of government and the churches have an iconic stature embodied in their architecture as intended symbols of community, the same cannot be said of the ballpark and its gasoline advertisement neighbor that, despite their architecture, have inherited their shrine-like status through historic association with the much beloved resident team of erstwhile losers. Old North Church, beyond its inherent elegance, has a national stature attributable as much to Paul Revere and Longfellow's poem as to the architecture itself. The latter day symbol of the city is of course the Big Dig, ranging from the sublime image of Christian Menn's cable-stay bridge, to the literally sub-liminal weeping walls of Tip's Tunnel. As a symbol of a city whose glass from one day to the next is either half-full or half-empty, it is not an unfitting monument. ■

Hubert Murray AIA has an architecture and planning practice in Cambridge, Massachusetts.





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BY JONATHAN POWERS

IN PRAISE OF IDENTITY

"Good artists copy; great artists steal." — Pablo Picasso

The US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) defines *identity theft* as "the use of [a person's] name, address, Social Security number (SSN), bank or credit card account number, or other identifying information without [that person's] knowledge, with the intent to commit fraud or other crimes." Identity theft, in other words, means pretending to be someone else, but with the specific intent of using the adopted identity to deceive others. Swapping one identity for another is easier than many of us probably suppose. In 2004 alone, more than 246,000 individual complaints were lodged with the FTC concerning identity theft, most of which involved a sum of money well under $1,000. Identity theft's trend toward ubiquity and democracy seems surprising only because we experience our own unique personal identities so vividly. Our identities — like our résumés — are works of art, obsessively sculpted to fit snugly into all the crenels and craters of a modern life. We carry these abstract tikis with us to every office party and PTA meeting. None of us would ever mistake our own identity for someone else's. And so it doesn't seem reasonable that stealing something so cumbersome and so personalized could be so easy.

Yet, as the artists and mystics have been telling us for millennia, an identity is really an elaborate fiction, a pretense discarded as soon as it ceases to be useful. Even our most cherished sources of identity — our ethnic heritages, levels of education, and social classes, for example — are far more arbitrary than we usually care to admit: ethnic heritage is a question of how far back one looks — two generations ago to Germany or 50 generations to Moorish Spain; even at the highest levels of education we are all equally ignorant outside the increasingly tiny domains of our expertise; and social classes are subject to the larger and more impersonal forces of economics and geography. In all cases, our identities are largely (though never entirely) voluntary. Further, recent tectonic shifts in information technology, marketing psychology, and financial systems have rendered the tissues of pretense that constitute our identities at once more abstract and more friable. In a world of infinitely replicable infomedia and balkanized marketing segments, assembling and donning another identity is no more difficult than wearing the right brands and learning to type. We are, in other words, all pretending to be someone, and it has never been easier to cobble a new identity for ourselves using the fragments modern culture has made of our lives.

American culture is at once at ease and at odds with fluidity of identity. Few cultures in human history have so aggressively pursued such an authentic form of egalitarianism. We Americans may often feel inconvenienced by identifying factors such as a Buddhist upbringing or a Spanish-sounding surname, but we rarely feel completely trapped by them. On the other hand, we are constantly urged simply to "be ourselves," by which is apparently meant that we should be true to our own unique, personal genius.

Such strong ambivalence is due in part to the fact that ease of pretense may be a dominant theme in our age. Indeed, it applies as well to buildings as to persons. Architecture even provides


THEFT

American culture is at once at ease and at odds with fluidity of identity. Few cultures in human history have so aggressively pursued such an authentic form of egalitarianism.

us with one of our most beloved and profound metaphors for an appearance which masks an underlying reality: the façade. A noteworthy shift in thinking about façade has occurred in our age, driven by the advance of building technology and the concomitant drift in our thinking about architectural identity. While the distinction between façade (or ornament) and structure has long served as a conceptual aid to builders, designers, and philosophers trying to think about how and why we build, it now serves primarily as a technical assumption. With steel substructures covered with whatever weatherproofing we like best, contemporary buildings reflect an unconscious belief that structure, function, and façade can be completely independent of one another. Any function can be housed in any building whatsoever.

Adaptive reuse represents the bright side of the freedom granted by the divorce of structure, function, and façade. The other, darker, side of the coin is the disintegration of architecture's visual vocabulary. Buildings are no longer implicitly legible merely as a corollary to their form. Laymen can no longer tell what role a building plays in the community simply by examining its façade. All too often these days, it seems buildings are simply matrices of quantum spaces, to be sequenced into whatever Tetris-block configuration of uses the owner of the moment so desires. A revealing symptom of our culture's fundamental architectural illiteracy is the fact that intensive signage is required not only to help people navigate within homogenized corridors and chambers, but also to permit them to distinguish between schools, prisons, and homes in the first place. Where architectural identity was once underpinned more or less equally by structure, façade, and function, architectural identity has become almost purely a function of façade. A major source of meaning in architecture is (or was) the dependable linkage between a building's façade, its structure and layout, and the kinds of activity housed within its spaces. The pre-eminent goal of contemporary architecture is thus not to design spaces that improve our bodies, minds, and souls, but rather to pin striking façades on protean buildings.

Like buildings throughout human history, our buildings seek to weave identities principally by using their façades to reference other buildings, artworks, or concepts. Architects, like all creative people, have always copied from each other, stolen ideas from great innovators, and paid tribute to their favorites. What is therefore interesting in contemporary architecture is not that architects play games referencing one another, but rather that those who design our buildings seem not to understand what they're referencing. Within a culture fully fluent in its own vibrant, living language of architectural forms, visual references imply structural and behavioral references. To use a Greek temple front to decorate an important government building is not merely to give the building a snazzy look, it is to imply a certain style of design as pertains to the structure (e.g., higher ceilings, larger spaces, more durable materials) and a more dignified register of speech and action. Just as authentic language, more than a mere jumble of marks or sounds, points beyond itself to a fact or concept, so an authentic architectural composition (what might be called a "good building") points beyond itself to a constellation of culturally significant attitudes, practices, and feelings.

We can criticize the Postmodernists for their cavalier cut-and-paste attitude toward visual forms, but the alienation of façade runs deeper than that. The Moderns are also guilty. Le Corbusier's fetish for industrial forms, best expressed in his dream of transforming homes into "machines for living," is deeply disturbing because it implies that he believed that all cultural functions would be equally well served by skyscraper cubicles, gargantuan gardens, and superhighways. Like the Postmodernists, he saw no essential connection between façade on the one hand and structure and function on the other.

When today's architects copy and steal from their predecessors and from each other, it's difficult to discern what their choices of subject matter are supposed to mean. Because the visual vocabulary of architectural identity has become shallow and self-referential, even highly skilled and well-intentioned architects have difficulty making their designs actually speak. It's no great challenge to design a building that shouts, "Look at me!" but crafting a building that says something gritty and complicated and true, and says it deftly, is another matter.

As it stands now, most architectural identity thefts are heists of questionable value. To employ the bigness of a jumbo jet without also making use of its dirty, servile strength; to mimic the towers of Oxford while deliberately setting aside its stuffy wisdom and priggish rigor; to clothe an apartment building in brick simply because architects in the same city chose to use brick in previous generations — these are petty thefts. Architects need to recover the art of architectural referencing, of copying — of *stealing*, in Picasso's sense. They should become identity thieves of the first order, mercilessly improving ideas by taking ownership of them.

As amalgams of visible, fungible, and reproducible units of information, architectural identities will always be fluid and ephemeral. It is precisely this flexibility that makes them interesting because it makes meaningful reinvention possible. The identities we choose always mean something, even and especially when we are not fully cognizant of the full ramifications of our choices. The key is choosing identities that are packed with meaning, replete with structural and behavioral references that contribute to the quality of the whole. Design needs to stop being about only the façade and go back to being about the strange power of buildings to express profound truths about the people who use them. ■

Jonathan Powers is a PhD candidate in the School of Architecture at McGill University in Montreal.



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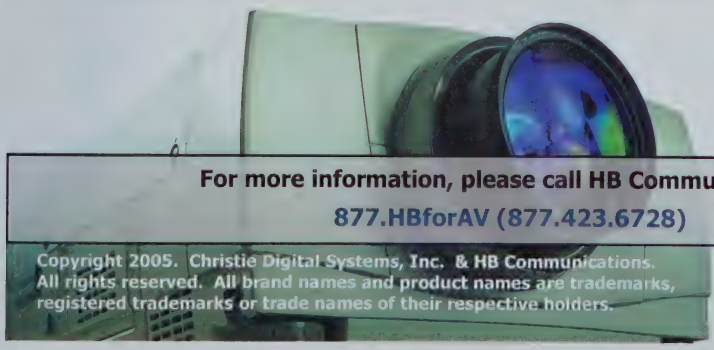
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who what where when why how

New questions about the history of Islamic architecture offer a fresh perspective on cultural identity

Nasser Rabbat talks with Jeff Stein AIA





Nasser Rabbat is the Aga Khan Professor of Islamic Architecture at MIT. Before receiving his PhD from MIT in 1991, he received degrees in architecture from the University of Damascus and UCLA and worked as a designer in Damascus and Los Angeles. Among other publications, he is co-editor of *Making Cairo Medieval* (2005) and the author of *The Citadel of Cairo: A New Interpretation of Mamluk Royal Architecture* (1995) and, in Arabic, *The Culture of Building and Building Culture: Essays and Articles on the Criticism and History of Architecture, 1985-2000* (2002).

Jeff Stein AIA is the architecture critic for *Banker & Tradesman* and the director of the architecture program at the Boston Architectural Center.



Hagia Sofia (Ayasofia) (Istanbul, 532-37). The edifice that most intrigued the Ottomans, who converted the Byzantine church into a mosque in 1453. Its interior space has a serene quality and humbling effect.

Jeff Stein: When many Westerners look at Islamic architecture, we see something that, in our innocence, we don't understand fully because we perceive a kind of "otherness" in it. Yet Islamic architecture isn't "other." It has its own strong identity and a rich and complex history.

Nasser Rabbat: That word "innocence" is actually a useful introduction to a complex subject. Innocence is a shared human quality. In our innocence, we tend to see ourselves — and others — as bearers of clear identities. We don't usually like to see ourselves as composites. For example, we tend to see other nations in terms of simple, singular identities rather than understand how complex each of those identities really is. And of course, those identities are reflected in architecture.

Jeff Stein: And there is a reluctance to think about architecture in those terms.

Nasser Rabbat: I admit that this is not something I initially thought about, either. My initial work on Islamic architecture was actually an attempt to go back to my roots. I trained in a school of architecture at Damascus and then at UCLA, but the curricula at both schools are Western-inspired. There's hardly any school of architecture outside of the West that is not Western. But there's nothing wrong with that. I believe that all architecture is the heritage of all people, although some architecture is the heritage of some people more so than others. It's only a question of degree. But there is no exclusionary architecture that says that you do not belong.

Jeff Stein: And yet the notion of identity in architecture suggests that there might be a moment in which someone in the presence of a particular work feels that he or she doesn't belong.

Nasser Rabbat: Of course. But don't you think some of that feeling is ideological, rather than spatially or architecturally induced?

Jeff Stein: Yes, I do.

Nasser Rabbat: For example, people who go to Cordoba's Mezquita, regardless of their religion, usually feel awe. The



The Great Mosque of Cordoba (Cordoba, Spain, 786, enlarged several times between 832 and 987). The intricate hypostyle arrangement with double-tiered arches over marble columns gives the impression of an urban forest for the faithful.

same applies to Hagia Sophia in Istanbul. Both are well-known religious symbols. Yet the architecture lends itself to some primordial human feeling. I am an unreligious person. But in these two spaces, I feel really touched, not because they are related to my heritage, but because they have broader meaning that I respond to. And that may be hard to understand because of the way we view history. We are ensconced in the belief that history has a certain sequence: we start from one point and move on, and every time the road forks, we forsake one path to proceed in one direction. So there have been exclusions in the history that we have. And there have also been attempts at saying, "This is mine and no one else's."

Jeff Stein: We see that in the sciences. Living systems lose quite a bit of their vitality when various branches of science dissect them as if they were mechanisms, as if each part belonged to a different scientific discipline. The interrelationships between the parts go missing, and then we miss understanding how the whole system works.

Nasser Rabbat: And architecture does that. I start my courses with [architectural historian] Bannister Fletcher's highly Eurocentric tree of architecture. It moves from a beginning in the classical tradition all the way down to the present Western tradition and excludes everyone else by describing them on that tree of architecture as the dead branches that are not going to grow.

One criticism of Fletcher is not that he excluded other cultures, but that he decided on a sequence that led from antiquity — an interpretation that he claimed to be his alone — and moved on to the present. I claim that Islamic architecture cannot be understood outside of classical architecture — the heritage of Islamic architecture is Greek or Roman classical architecture. The architecture of Egypt, Syria, Turkey, or Cyprus between the years 300 BC and 700 AD cannot be excluded from the classical world. But what's more important is that those regions also contributed to the development of classical architecture, in ways that are regionally defined and somewhat idiosyncratic. And those elements should be brought into the vocabulary of classical architecture and understood as something that enriches it. But we usually look at classical architecture as if it's purified of all of these regionalisms; it's presented as something that started with a very specific order and has come all the way down to the present almost undisturbed. The early, foundational monuments of what is called Islamic architecture are actually rooted in the classical architecture of the sixth and seventh century. The later monuments of Islamic architecture are rooted in another classical tradition, which is Central Asian, Persian, and ultimately Chinese and Indian classical architecture. What Islamic architecture has done over time is to bridge all of those traditions. It synthesized them and made them part of its own heritage, and vice-versa.

Jeff Stein: Have you been able to document the kind of cultural dialogue that has gone on?

Nasser Rabbat: It's a recent interest of mine. Initially I thought I was going to look at the Crusaders period. The tendency in this field has been to say, "Who influenced whom?" To me this is almost a redundant question: it doesn't really matter, because everyone influenced everyone else. What's more interesting is to see how, with all the strands of influences in that period, you could create either something original or something derivative. If we look at mosques that were built in, say, Cairo in 1200, right at the end of the Crusaders period, there are elements that we could isolate as having come from an encounter with the Crusaders. And so we have historians saying things like, "This decorative element in a religious complex in Cairo must have come from the Loire Valley, because we have an example there dating from around 1100, whereas this example in Cairo is 1284. Therefore, the Loire Valley is the root of influence." I don't think this is how we should think about architecture. We should think more broadly about what it means to learn that the Loire Valley has a presence in an architectural element in Cairo in 1284, despite the fact that the two had been fighting for the previous 200 years.

Jeff Stein: How are we going to find out about this?

Nasser Rabbat: Research. What is important at this time is not to theorize but to remain open-minded. And of course, not to see this all as a tree that starts from some roots and moves all the way to the present. It's actually strands of things that are coming



The so-called Little Monastery (Deruneh, Syria, sixth century). The stone façade presents a typical "continuous molding" motif of the "Dead Cities" region, which also appears in later Romanesque and Medieval Islamic architecture.

together all the time. Although my primary focus has been the Medieval period, I am also looking at the 19th century and the burgeoning interaction around the Mediterranean. People like the Welsh architect Owen Jones, for example, were very interested in exploring what Islamic architecture had to offer — not just what Islamic ornamentalism had to offer, although ornamentalism ended up as the greater influence on designers like Jones and William Morris, who literally turned it into wallpaper. But there were a few architects who were looking more deeply. One was the German architect Karl von Diebitsch, who in the 1850s and 1860s promoted Islamic architecture as an industrial-age architecture, because its use of pattern lent itself to prefabrication.

Jeff Stein: Is pattern, rather than representation, one of the characteristics of Islamic architecture?

Nasser Rabbat: I don't want to pigeonhole it as such, because there are periods in which representation dominates. The period that I'm interested in, right before the Crusades, is actually the beginning of a representational phase of architecture, which lasted for about 200 years. What was happening then was a change in population: this is when the Turks became a more dominant presence in the Middle East. But the architecture also changed — there was a tremendous movement toward volumetric expression, where architecture was no longer the superimposition of planar elements. The architecture of the late 11th century was quite austere; it was really about the play of volumes, and decoration was limited to specific spaces.

Jeff Stein: My question probably came from that Western impulse to determine a fixed identity in Islamic architecture.

Nasser Rabbat: I would say not only that Islamic architecture has no fixed identity, but also that the claim of a Western sequence of identities is an extremely misguided one. It's impoverishing to everyone. It would be much better for all if we started to understand historical context beyond the point in time in which you can prove that people were in contact. That means seeing beyond the fact that Marco Polo went to China and came back with something new. In fact, there were millions of unknown Marco Polos who were bringing things back all the time; the exchange between people has been continuous. Despite our focus on communication technology today, communication has always been the dominant theme throughout history. Isolated cultures that develop their own image of themselves — their identity, if you will — in isolation of other cultures, are a myth of the nationalist age.

I'll give you an example: the recent exhibition at the Louvre, "La France Romane," which is about "Romanesque" France between the 10th and 12th centuries. Of course, there was no France in the 10th century; that is the creation of a nationalist perspective. The exhibition included objects from Constantinople, Persia, Syria, and Egypt that were remade in France, and therefore called French. For example, a crystal stone vase, a form for which Cairo was famous, was remade into an ewer by adding a base and spout. The exhibition never asked how someone made the decision to take something beautiful, add to it, and in the process transform it into something else that is also beautiful. It never acknowledged the original source other than to mention that the body may have been made in Egypt. France today is a culture that is trying to defend itself. But cultural boundaries today, as in history, are very porous.

Jeff Stein: And we can see that fact at work on many levels, in many places. In the American Midwest, there are numerous examples of Prairie Style houses that no one connected with Frank Lloyd Wright ever designed, because people would see Wright houses while commuting by train to Chicago, and come back and say, "I'd like to do that." You can transfer that microcosm of the work of a single architect — how it was adapted and then spread geographically — to the macrocosm of the Islamic world.

Nasser Rabbat: Of the entire world. I am teaching a course that is Islamic history, but what I'm trying to impart to my students is an open-minded method. I show them examples of work from different places but the same period that reflect the fact that these cultures were in communication — not under influence.

Jeff Stein: I was recently at a workshop about the current situation in Iraq; part of the discussion focused on the ethical



The Church of Saints Paul and Moses (Dar Qita, Syria, circa 418). The door frame of this small church in a minor "Dead City" site presents a wealth of exquisitely carved Syrian classical motifs.

responsibility of Western architects in its rebuilding. An historian presented a slide of Frank Lloyd Wright's 1950s plan for Baghdad's redevelopment. People literally caught their breath, because it was so beautiful, and so right for that place. Wright was in Baghdad; Walter Gropius was in Baghdad —

Nasser Rabbat: Mies van der Rohe was there, too. A lot of the staples of the Modern Movement went to Baghdad.

Jeff Stein: And they felt very much at home there.

Nasser Rabbat: The trend today is for people in Baghdad, or people who claim to speak for Baghdad, to reject the intervention of a Frank Lloyd Wright. And for people in Illinois, or people who claim to represent the heritage of Illinois, to say that Frank Lloyd Wright has no place in Baghdad. That rejection, from both sides, has to be resisted. We can of course reject the implied dominance of an attitude that says, "I am the modern architect. I bring you my knowledge. You receive my knowledge." But if you and I believe that we are all partaking of the same sources, then your knowledge is a composite knowledge to which my people have contributed heavily. I would then have no problem with your suggesting that we build in a certain way, because we share sensitivities. Rejection of your ideas is really a political act, an ideological act. A lot of world historians are working on that pivotal moment in which what used to be called the open world system became a closed world system, a power relationship that is constantly defined by a dominant and a dominated.

Jeff Stein: That suggests that when the Egyptian architect Hassan Fathy, in the middle of the 20th century, was fighting against what he called internationalism, he was really addressing that power relationship.

Nasser Rabbat: Hassan Fathy came onto the scene at a time when the Egyptians were struggling to assert their identity and independence from the colonial power that dominated them at the time, which was Great Britain. Fathy was looking for an Egyptian heritage, and in essence invented a style that was initially dependent on two sources. One was the Mamluk architecture of Cairo, and the second was the architecture of what is today southern Egypt but until the 16th century was the independent kingdom of Nubia. Fathy combined the two, creating a style he called vernacular Egyptian. In the 1940s, Egyptians weren't debating whether they were Arabs or something else; in fact, the "something else" was still strong in their mind. Thirty years before, they called themselves Europeans, because Alexandria was a classical capital, and the ancient Egyptians had influenced Greece and were really not Arabs. But by the 1950s, pan-Arabism was on the rise and Fathy began to refer to his style as Arab. By the time he died in 1989, he called it Islamic; the Islamic identity was on the rise and Arabism was losing ground.

Jeff Stein: What does it mean to be essentialist about Islamic architecture?

Nasser Rabbat: What does it mean to be essentialist about anything? In its simplest form, essentialism is not very different from puritanism. In architecture, it refers to people who want to see a return to some pure elements that frame who they are. I'm trying to resist using the word identity, but they wish to claim what they believe to be theirs. An essentialist is not only someone who claims something that happened in the past to be his or hers alone, but also someone who claims that that thing will remain his or hers for the foreseeable future.

Jeff Stein: And that person is probably mistaken on both counts.

Nasser Rabbat: We have to remember that this is an ideological debate. This is a time in which people have become much more essentialist, much more identity-bound or puritan in their view of the world. I'm instead advocating a hybrid approach toward the world and toward history, because people have never lived in isolation. Perhaps you lived in Florence and I lived in Damascus. We did not necessarily interact, but our representatives interacted and brought us stories, and perhaps actual objects, from the other city. We live by words, we live by imagination. And that is fed by stories, images, and tales that are gathered from many sources. Today we have what are fashionably called neo-nomads. Who are these people? Where are their



The church complex of St. Simeon, Syria (near Aleppo, Syria, mostly sixth century). This most famous of the "Dead Cities" sites includes many Syrian classical motifs, such as this acanthus scroll cornice running along the wall of an apse.

boundaries? I cross the Atlantic about 10 times a year. Where are my roots at this point in time? There are about 10 cities in the world that I know how to move around in. Until the age of 24, I only knew Damascus. Now, there are cities that I know much better than I know Damascus.

Jeff Stein: It seems that it now takes less and less time to become that neo-nomad, to be equally comfortable in any city around the world.

Nasser Rabbat: Most Americans who are in the upper echelon of society are neo-nomads: they have a home in New York, but spend a weekend in Los Angeles, another in Miami, a third in Chicago. And each of those cities represents a different culture. And now you can even add to that mix Seoul, Tokyo, Sydney, Beijing.

I want people to travel. Perhaps you've heard the statistic that 80 percent of Americans have no passport. I want people to see each other, to see how un-different we are. Americans understand that better than the rest of the world in at least one way. There are people around the world who think that McDonald's is a tasteless export, and that if McDonald's comes into their city, then their city has been Americanized. But there is no American city that will reject the notion of a Greek or Syrian or Egyptian or Chinese restaurant.

Unfortunately, our educational system is still perpetuating artificial boundaries in our architectural, artistic, and literary lives. Perhaps it is an artifact of the post-colonial movement, which taught the West not to explore the rest of the world but to somehow retreat to its own trenches. I want my scholarship to work in the opposite direction. I have been focusing on Egypt, but I am now going back to look at Syria, which is such a hybrid country on all levels. And it has many examples of hybrid classical architecture. What makes one hybrid succeed? What establishes it as the norm if there is nothing inherently superior in it? Larry Vale, the head of the MIT urban planning program who has studied post-colonial capitals, has concluded that national styles — national architectural identities — represent the architectural language of the elite.

Jeff Stein: So there's a sense that identity comes from patronage?

Nasser Rabbat: From an oppressive patronage, as a matter of fact.

Jeff Stein: Ordinarily. But we, too, are working in a society of patronage. For example, your patron just happens to be an institution, MIT, that allows and in fact advocates a broad world view.

Nasser Rabbat: Yes. I am extremely cognizant that I am lucky to be in my position. Perhaps if I were elsewhere, under a different system, what I say would be considered heresy. But the historical role of patronage, such as in post-colonial societies, has been to promote standardization and homogenization. Homogenization would not be so dangerous if it were agenda-free. But homogenization almost always advances the interest of a specific group over a larger group. For example, the WASP culture was the norm in America; in order to reach a decision-making level in this society, you had to be accepted by WASP culture, either by marrying into it or behaving like it or acquiring enough money and dressing properly to appear to be part of it. This was a real pressure in the early 20th century.

Let me tell you the story of my name. My first name is that of the Egyptian president, even though I am Syrian; he was the hero of Arabism when I was born. My last name refers to a silk maker; my family has been in the silk trade for 300 years. When I became an American citizen, I told a friend that I would like to run for office, but no one would vote for a person named Nasser Rabbat. And she said, "Well, why don't you change your name?" I said, "I don't want to change my name," because I had lived 40 years of my life with this name. And she said, "Well, let's meet midway. What is the meaning of Nasser?" I told her that Nasser is Victor in Arabic. And everyone calls me Mr. Rabbit. So my friend said, "Why don't you change your first name to Victor? It will still mean Nasser. And since everyone is calling you Rabbit, how about changing your last name to O'Hare? Your name can be Victor O'Hare." This would have been the expedient solution. But it's a reflection of homogenization. I want a world in which we can all run for office with any name. I think architecture has always accomplished that. The world of architecture is a hybrid world. It's just that we do not recognize it. Or, perhaps, that we prefer not to recognize it. ■

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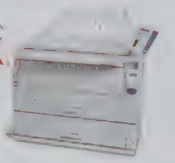


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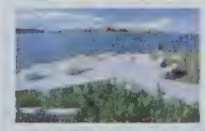
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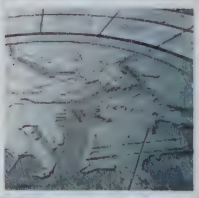


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Covering the Issues

Still learning from Las Vegas... The AIA's recent national convention was held in the glitzy center of schlock, the wedding-chapel capital of the world, *and* the fastest growing city in the country — a title Vegas has held for over a decade. While the AIA may have largely ignored its surroundings, the general press certainly knows that something big is happening there. In 2004, Vegas added 45,000 jobs and boasted the hottest housing market in US history: sales grew 52 percent, an annual increase more than triple those of New York or San Francisco. In "Rolling the Dice on Vegas Real Estate" (***Details***, June/July 2005), Ian Daly reports on the current Vegas craze: condos. By the end of this year, 100 new projects totaling nearly 34,000 units will have begun construction. Lofts, naturally, are the most popular. And why shouldn't this city create a Fort Point Channel in the sand? It's already spawned Paris, Venice, and Caesar's Rome.

Vegas, baby, Vegas... Zoom in on total decadence, and check out "Steve Wynn's Biggest Gamble" (***Vanity Fair***, June 2005). Nina Munk gets up close and personal with this developer extraordinaire, who is credited for "sanitizing the town and giving it middle-class respectability" with "recreation-and-entertainment businesses." They are casinos, yes, but so much more. Wynn's latest endeavor came in at $2.7 billion — $1 billion more than what is now budgeted for the Freedom Tower.

The boys of summer... For variations on the black suit and other light-hearted insights to males, a special issue on "The American Man 2005" (***Esquire***, July 2005) offers "inspiring profiles of extraordinary lives, plus one dog, 7 architects, and the sexiest woman alive." Indeed, the seven designers fill the fashion spread. The seven real architects-turned-models include the stratospherically known (Daniel Libeskind), the somewhat-known (Richard Gluckman), the soon-to-be-known (Martin Finio), and the BSA's very own ex-president. Which one? While the possibilities are surely vast, the answer is below.

More eye candy... ***Surface*** magazine takes on architecture and other related pursuits in its annual "design" issue, with its focus on "Mapping the Beautiful Mixed-Up World of Fashion, Architecture, and Design" (issue #53). Good beach-browsing here, and a few meaty bits, including Erin Cullterton's "Net Losses," which presents unrealized house designs that were victims of the dot-com crash. This is the Modernist Newport-that-wasn't: contemporary mansions intended for titans of our recent Gilded Age.

Take it or leave it... Some voices in the electronic media are questioning the Supreme Court's recent Kelo v. City of New London decision, which upheld efforts in New London, Connecticut, to redevelop the Fort Trumbull neighborhood through eminent domain. The American Planning Association has endorsed the decision, but libertarians writing in ***reasononline*** (June 24, 2005) and ***Planetizen*** (July 5, 2005) object — as does former Milwaukee mayor John Norquist, now head of the Congress for the New Urbanism (***PBS Online NewsHour***, June 24, 2005). They predict sweeping effects, similar to the 1954 Berman v. Parker decision, which unleashed urban renewal as we knew it in the 1960s: projects like Boston's West End.



Extreme makeovers... "Is It Time for the Preservation of Modernism?" asks ***The New York Times Magazine*** (May 15, 2005). Now 50 to 75 years old, the elderly structures that were once striking symbols of the future are not aging gracefully. Should they be removed to make way for the Next Big Thing (much as 20th-century Modernism bulldozed the Victorian cities before them), or should preservationists now apply their strategies to their long-time foes? *The Times* dances around the subject and the underlying questions: how — and should — Modern architecture be saved? ■

Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA, directs the architecture studios at Smith College and is a designer at Rogers Marvel Architects in New York City.

Answer: Brian Healy AIA

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Gillette Stadium in Foxboro, MA
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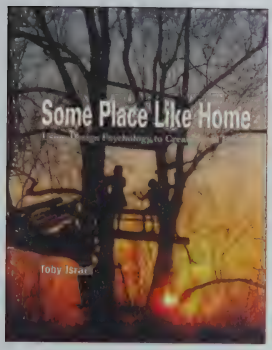
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SOME PLACE LIKE HOME: USING DESIGN PSYCHOLOGY TO CREATE IDEAL PLACES
by Toby Israel
John Wiley, 2003
Reviewed by A. Vernon Woodworth AIA

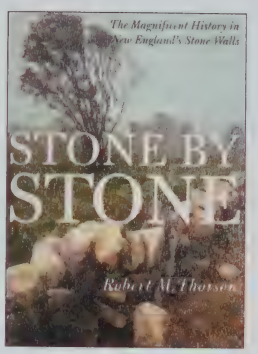
Toby Israel explores here what we all acknowledge but for which there is no adequate theoretical framework: our profound emotional connection to our environment. "Design psychology" is her term for the reservoir of memory and fantasy that informs our preferences and our choices with regard to the world we live in. Her account ranges from personal musings to interviews with designers (Michael Graves, Charles Jencks, Andres Duany) to exercises you can do at home to uncover your own design psychology. Interspersed among all this are references to the work of dozens of psychologists, urbanists, and architectural theorists. Her tone is occasionally breathless ("My tropical adrenalin rush was even more pronounced on this February day, since I was on my way to visit Andres Duany, the current darling of the international planning world"), and her ambitious scope and frequent sharp turns can leave the reader in a similar state. But Israel's excitement is communicable, for she is exploring emotional memories of a particularly vivid variety.

Designers who do residential work understand that their clients are operating from internal images of tremendous power. This is design psychology at work. Israel's approach may have its greatest value in providing a method for designers to work with the "self-place story" of their clients and to explore their own spatial/emotional history. In their interviews, Graves, Jencks, and Duany appear to have gained new insights into the emotional impacts of their environmental histories. This is apparently due largely to Israel's probing. But her guiding principle appears to be her exploration of her own environmental history; this gives the book an autobiographical tone and Israel's "discoveries" a self-fulfilling flavor.

Certainly we carry images of our childhood environments that we draw upon as we seek our orientation in the adult world; Israel fails, however, to explore fully the meaning of these images. Michael Graves describes the void left in his childhood home by the frequent absences of his alcoholic father, and Israel observes that Graves' fascination with the stockyard buildings of his hometown is more than spatial, as these were his father's workplace. We discover that the stockyards influenced Graves' conversion of a warehouse into his residence, and Israel recognizes other clues that Graves is still working through childhood attachments in his life and work. But her perspective on this is idealized, devoid of an acknowledgment that there is pain lurking beneath the surface. She does not explore the meaning of "stockyard" as an image, only the spatial residue as it manifests in Graves' design work.

Israel's work provides a new entry point into the emerging field of "ecopsychology," the study of our psychological relationship to our environment. Like all psychological endeavors, it is a study in subjectivity, open to further growth and development.

A. Vernon Woodworth AIA holds a diploma in analytic psychology from the C.G. Jung Institute-Boston. An associate at R.W. Sullivan Inc., he chairs the BSA Codes Committee and is an instructor at the Boston Architectural Center.



STONE BY STONE: THE MAGNIFICENT HISTORY IN NEW ENGLAND'S STONE WALLS
by Robert M. Thorson
Walker & Company, 2002
Reviewed by Phyllis Andersen

Robert Thorson uses the history of the stone wall to recast New England's agricultural history. In this rich and intriguing study, he generates a new timeline for land use that erases the hackneyed image of early yeoman farmers with one eye on the boulder at their feet and the other looking west, fixed on stone-free, treeless land with no impediments to cultivation. Thorson is not interested in the extravagant stone walls of late 19th-century estates, which are more products of Colonial Revival nostalgia than authentic farm labor. His focus is on the "tossed wall" — primitive, mortar-free, tossed to the edge of fields rather than laid up in orderly fashion. These are the walls one finds in New England woods, less walls than cryptograms of field-clearing labor that define perimeters now transformed into melancholy ruins by geological forces of aging.

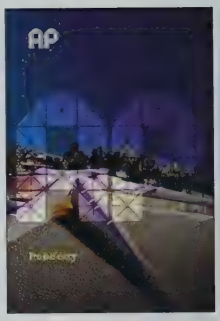
The earliest settlers in New England preferred the stone-free coastal lowlands, hence no stone walls. They led a communal life sharing pastures and fields without ownership boundaries. The surge of stone wall building came about in the 19th

century, when the population spread inland and improved the land for farming. Forest-clearing exposed the soil to deep winter freezing and spring thaws; then began the inevitable course of the land heaving up field stones that obstructed the plow. As communal culture gave way to private land ownership with tensions over legal boundaries, stone walls as field boundaries became what Thorson poetically calls "no-trespassing signs written in stone."

Thorson, a professor of geology at the University of Connecticut, mildly rebukes those who perceive New England farming sentimentally. He looks hard at function and utility. Among his examples are double stone walls that served as linear depositories for nonbiodegradable agricultural refuse. He points out that the amount of stone removed and relocated regulated the scale of New England fields. Always aware of time, labor, and manpower involved in farming, Thorson shifts focus from the perimeter stones to the energy needed to clear fields. He refers to the modern eye focused on an anthill: to the ant, the mound is only a sort of dumpsite incidental to the task of creating an underground home.

In his famous essay "The Necessity for Ruins," J.B. Jackson talks about the preservation community's need for discontinuity, for a period of neglect before one rediscovers old values and seeks to restore the landscape to its former beauty (a "born-again landscape" he calls it). Thorson's passion for preserving the remaining walls of New England — many are on private land and subject to sale and dispersal — prompted him to create a website (www.stonewall.uconn.edu) and to write a sequel, *Exploring Stone Walls: A Field Guide to New England's Stone Walls* (2005), in which he presents a detailed taxonomy of wall types along with a guide to their general location.

Phyllis Andersen is the former director of the Institute for Cultural Landscape Studies of the Arnold Arboretum and is a member of the *ArchitectureBoston* editorial board.



IS IT ALL ABOUT IMAGE?
by Laura Iloniemi
Wiley Academy, 2004
Reviewed by Nancy Egan

Laura Iloniemi invites discussion with her title question — is it all about image? — and proceeds to engage readers in a round of informed commentary, interviews, case studies,

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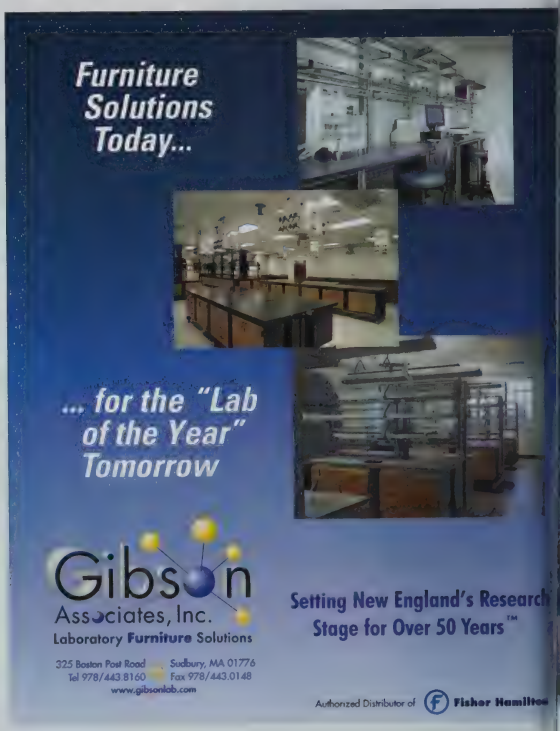
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and snappy to-do lists. The real topic is publicity, specifically media relations, and the role it plays in the development of firm image. More than a how-to and less than a treatise, the book has a distinctly British accent, although the author looks at several international practices and interviews US-based architects, public-relations consultants, and editors. The lessons here are on-target for firms anywhere that are addressing questions of self-promotion.

A successful public-relations consultant, Iloniemi uses the language and format of the book to reinforce her messages about the value of a well-constructed analysis, the importance of clear writing and first-rate imagery, and, especially, the place of architecture in the culture. Visually and verbally, the book is a treat. Provocative headlines, a variety of typefaces and point sizes, a rich mix of contributing authors, and a stunning collection of images from full-bleed shots of projects to delicate watercolors and line drawings allow the reader to dive into the discourse on almost any page.

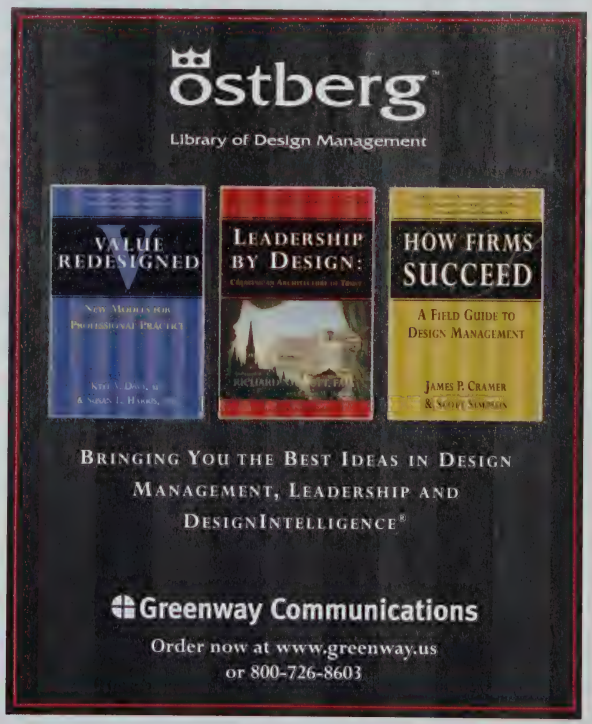
Noting the "complex set of inhibitions and concerns" that surrounds the topic of image in the profession, the author makes the case for public relations. As she says, "Public relations is just that — relating to the public." The point is to make certain that the firm's message is pertinent and engaging to the audience — in this case, the media who in turn speak to the wider world of clients, critics, and peers. Interviews with eight architectural writers and editors reveal distinctive points of view with a common concern for quality and professionalism, not packaging and spin.

For those who still believe that "art should speak for itself," Iloniemi offers insight into the image-making efforts of a number of firms. There are large corporate firms, such as ARUP, with in-house PR staff and longstanding relationships with the press. More intriguing are the strategies of the smaller firms such as New York-based SHoP Architecture, where the partners have divided the PR roles within the practice to good effect, and Ocean North in Helsinki, which has focused on publishing ideas as well as projects to raise awareness of the practice. Some may be surprised to find Santiago Calatrava's publicist talking about what it takes to promote the starchitects.

In the end, is it all about image? The author says no, although it certainly helps. The role of the media, as she sees it, is "encouraging better buildings to be built through educating the public to demand them." Architects must be part of the broader culture and, in order to do that, they have to market themselves and their ideas. This book is designed to help them.

Nancy Egan heads New Voodou, a consulting practice that provides image/content development to the design community from offices in Santa Monica, California, and Cambridge, Massachusetts.







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THE IDENTITY CORNER

www.idcorner.org

Some people are thinking hard about "identity architecture." One of them is Stefan Brands, who maintains this site and is an "expert on the subjects of digital identity management, secure access control, modern cryptography, electronic payment systems, privacy-enhancing technologies, and non-intrusive security."

COUNCIL FOR EUROPEAN URBANISM

www.ceunet.org

Somehow, "euro-sprawl" doesn't carry the design cachet usually associated with the "euro" prefix. Europe has its own development pressures and corresponding concerns, and the CEU wants to do something about them.

ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER: PRESERVATION BRIEF 17

www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs/brief17.htm

The National Park Service offers technical preservation resources, including its "Preservation Briefs" series. Here's a checklist for identifying and evaluating elements that contribute to architectural character in historic structures.

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PRIVACY RIGHTS CLEARINGHOUSE

www.privacyrights.org

The PRC is a nonprofit consumer advocacy group offering advice and resources to help you maintain control over your identity. A recent tip: Don't order your credit report online — there are too many "imposter" sites.

ROOTS & ROUTES

www.rootsandroutes.net

This innovative site promotes "heritage travel" and explores cultural identities in North America through migration patterns, settlements, and symbolic landscapes.

BABY'S NAMED A BAD, BAD THING

http://notwithoutmyhandbag.com/babynames/index.html

The folks who have been giving America's children unpronounceable and unspellable names seem to be turning their attention to America's architecture firms. This, people, is a *very* bad, bad thing.

We're always looking for intriguing websites — however unidentifiable the connection to architecture. Send your candidates to: epadjen@architects.org.



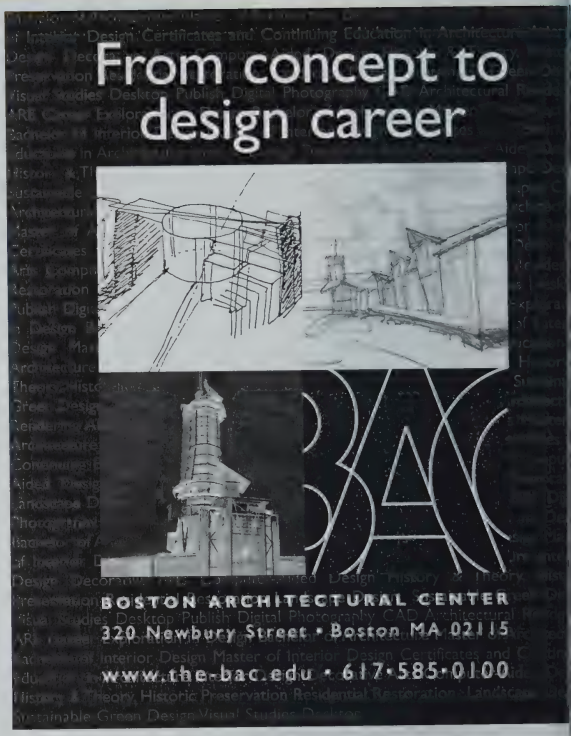
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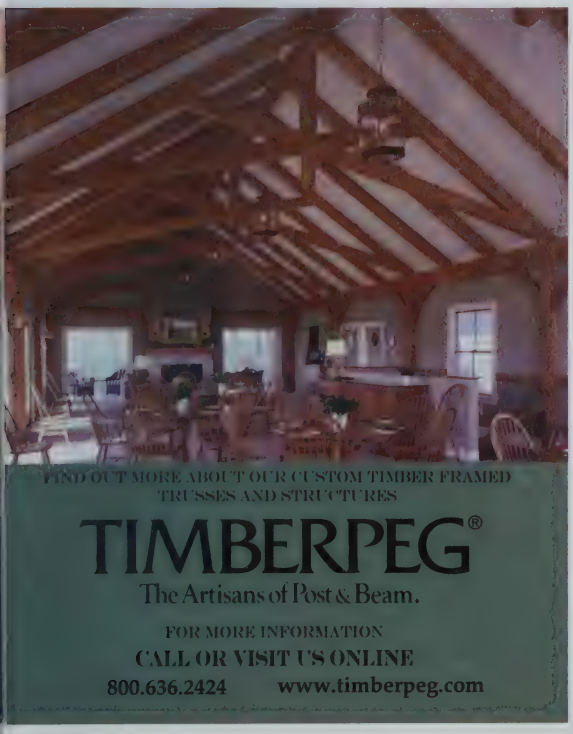
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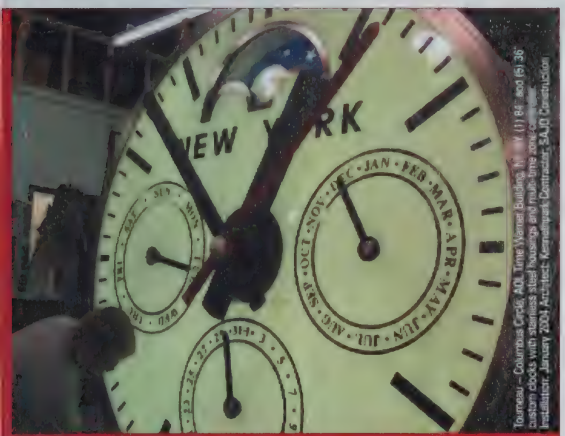
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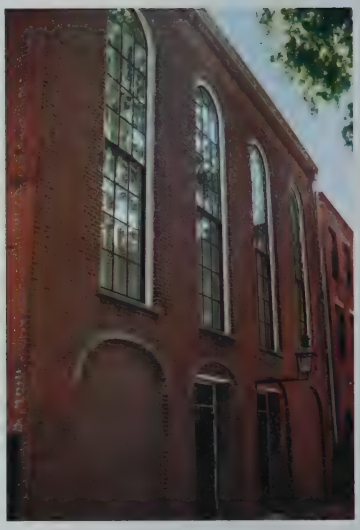
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The African Meeting House



When I was a child, all that I knew about the history of black people in America could be summed up in one word: slavery. Enslaved we arrived from darkest Africa and enslaved we worked and enslaved we remained until Abraham Lincoln signed a piece of paper and launched a war to set us free.

About rebellions I heard nothing; even about the Underground Railroad and Harriet Tubman I was told scarcely a word. I was in college before I learned that in cities such as Boston and Philadelphia and even New Orleans, communities of *free* black people had lived and worked and even thrived out from the yoke, if not the continuing threat, of slavery.

Astonishing, such ignorance. And also, damaging; the kind of damage that rolls and rolls and rolls downhill. At a Black History event last February, an undergraduate agreed with me when I said many African-Americans mythologize Africa not because it deserves it — which it does and does not — but because our history in this country pains them so much. "Who wants to have been a slave?" the student asked. "It's shameful."

All of which is to explain why I took my children to the African Meeting House on Boston's Beacon Hill. I want them to know the shame of slavery is not theirs to carry. And to know slavery is only part of our story — a crucial part, to be sure, but far from definitive.

The Meeting House is the oldest black church edifice still standing in the land. Built in 1805 by black Bostonians tired of discrimination in white-owned churches, it quickly became the center not only of black spiritual life but of community development and social activism as well. Folks called it the black Faneuil Hall.

The Meeting House, with its soaring windows and elegant brick façade, evokes English architectural style. In this it stands indistinguishable from other buildings of its time, despite the fact that $1,500 of the $7,700 required for its construction was donated by Cato Gardner, a blacksmith and former slave born in Africa. The building bears a plaque commemorating Gardner but no African flourishes, no carved wooden doors or geometric paintings. Looking up at the arched doorways I wonder: was this assimilation or practicality? Yet they called it "African" instead of "Colored" — the polite term at the time — though surely few 19th-century Boston blacks had seen Africa. Was this defiance? Was it gorgeous racial pride? And what did it mean when, in the 1850s, the name was changed to St. Paul's Baptist Church — was this the simple sweep of time or a symbolic moving away from Africa? When blacks began migrating to Roxbury at the end of the 19th century, the building was sold to a Jewish congregation, not to be regained until 1972. Shifts in neighborhood identity are natural, part of city life. Still, I wonder if a people so brutally severed from their history can afford to disconnect, even temporarily, with the symbols of their past.

I don't know the answers to these questions, but I ask them for my kids. We stand outside and run our hands across 200-year-old bricks made by proud, free, determined black people. Then we visit the museum at the Smith School next door, because place makes history concrete, especially to kids. When I was young, we took field trips to Chucalissa Indian Village and to the battlefields of Shiloh, and thus Indians and the carnage of the Civil War became real to me. But as far as I knew, Memphis had no black history worth mentioning: Beale Street — home of the blues — was a boarded-up strip for drunks and prostitutes, the Lorraine Motel — where Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated — a shuttered, decaying, neglected wreck. As far as I knew, black people had accomplished little in America, save survival. I must teach my children better than that. ■

Kim McLarin is the author of two novels, *Taming It Down* and *Meeting of the Waters* (William Morrow Inc.). A former journalist for *The New York Times* and *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, she is now writer-in-residence at Emerson College and is currently at work on her third novel.



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Boston's famed swan boats, descendents of the pleasure-garden tradition, recall the gondolas popular in many 19th-century parks.

PLEASURE

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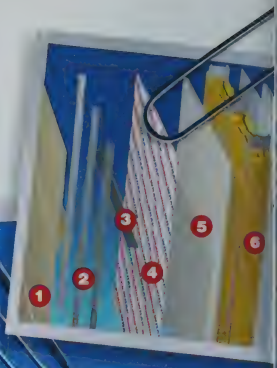
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Good for You

Consensus is telling. What has been the consensus reaction when people hear that this issue's theme is "Pleasure"? Raised eyebrows. And though the raised eyebrows are usually accompanied by chuckles, smiles, or chin tucks that say, "You've got to be kidding," the consensus is clear: People think pleasure is naughty.

Pleasure is not far removed from delight — which, with commodity and firmness, has been a measure of good architecture for more than 2,000 years; if you are not a recipient of a Pritzker Prize, you may not know that Vitruvius' famous phrase is even inscribed on the medal. So why the tittering?

Although pleasure often connotes innocent enjoyment, it also suggests the voluptuous and sybaritic. It especially suggests physical enjoyment — a visceral, physical reaction, the stimulation of the senses. Perhaps you were once an adolescent who snickered as your English teacher patiently tried to distinguish "sensuous" (referring to the senses) from "sensual" (often referring to sexuality). Most people never get that straight, a symptom, perhaps, of the fact that our culture is hopelessly confused about the role of pleasure in our lives.

And if we're confused about the role of pleasure in our lives, we are even more confused about the role of pleasure in our buildings. We deliberately avoid the language of the senses as we discuss architecture, choosing instead the vocabulary of aesthetics, occasionally enlivened by metaphorical references to other disciplines, such as semiotics, biology, and geology. Architecture, we therefore suggest, belongs to the life of the mind.

But the perception — the enjoyment — of architecture is frequently anything but intellectual. Tamara Roy AIA notes, "While architects can explain the intelligence and organization behind a space, it is not until they verbalize how it will *feel* — the shimmering of light, a scent in the air, the coolness of stone, the life that is lived there — that clients can become engaged." If her essay in this issue seems to have an unusual "voice," it is because the language of the senses rarely finds a place in architectural magazines.

A bit of graffiti in a college architecture studio once said: "If you can't solve a problem, change it." Sometimes the act of redefining a problem — tweaking its premise or its parameters — leads to a better solution. Producing consistently good buildings is clearly a problem we have yet to solve; a look at new development across America suggests that building attractive, sustainable communities is even more daunting. What would happen if we made pleasure an assumed attribute, if not the point, of architecture? Can we learn to describe buildings as sensuous environments without feeling foolish, or worse, anti-intellectual?

Some designers, planners, and urbanists are already at work, recasting cities and mixed-use environments as entertainment centers. Entertainment is undoubtedly pleasurable, but to evaluate environments only in terms of their entertainment value presents an economic view that misses much of the point. Architecture sits at the nexus of the mind-body connection — a relationship that we have largely ignored, even though it represents the frontier of research in other fields.

Can we learn to describe buildings as sensuous environments without feeling foolish, or worse, anti-intellectual?

Bostonians might find that our Puritan roots are a stumbling block in such discussions — not because of the Puritans' mythic suppression of pleasure, but because of their more notable and enduring legacy: the concept of commonwealth. The pursuit of pleasure is inherently selfish; it seems at odds with promoting the common good. But if we can design environments that joyfully and deliberately give pleasure to their occupants, we will create places that are good for us all. ■

Elizabeth S. Padjen FAIA
Editor



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Letters Letters Letters

I was particularly taken by the May/June 2005 issue on Boston City Hall. When I was head of public buildings at the General Services Administration, I got involved in the Norman Leventhal/Mayor Menino effort. I offered to consider redeveloping the site of the low-rise part of the JFK Federal Building if it would help make better development sense of the plaza. That evoked some interesting opposition, both from within and outside GSA. We hired Koetter Kim & Associates to help us move our square footage to a different part of City Hall Plaza (and help accommodate a hotel and additional commercial development).

Your editor's letter was just right, especially in its observation that the neglect of the building and the failure to do anything signifies an atrophied civic spirit, or "civitas," as my mentor Senator Moynihan would have said. It's small solace that the disease is not unique to Boston. Washington's Beaux Arts city hall was decrepit for decades. But here, GSA and the city successfully, if warily, partnered in the building's renovation and expansion.

Robert A. Peck, Hon. AIA
Greater Washington Board of Trade
Washington, DC

We very much appreciate the thoughtful comments by the participants in the roundtable discussion on Boston City Hall.

Though we do not object to any criticism of our controversial building, we are happy that positive voices are also being heard and not only the frequently shallow comments that make the news.

We are therefore most grateful to you for establishing a more balanced view of City Hall in the context of the city's history and for the handsome presentation of the building in the pages of this special issue.

Gerhard Kallmann FAIA
Michael McKinnell FAIA
Kallmann McKinnell & Wood Architects
Boston

In order to possess a distinctive school of architecture ["School Spirit," September/October 2005] like Russian Constructivism or Bauhaus, a geographic locality must have unifying social, financial, and political forces. At the very least, it must have a succession of great architectural personalities, like Sullivan and Wright in Chicago. Boston has none of the above. The market forces typically care about myopic profitability much more than quality of architecture. Our community engagement has shown an extremely disparate set of values that can only create the proverbial horse designed by a committee. The lack of artistic courage that distinguishes the overwhelming majority of practicing architects cannot breed anything better than a decent mediocrity. Boston's academia could at least create an abstract school of architecture, but that has not been happening either — and, as an alumnus of the Harvard Graduate School of Design, I can attest to that.

Twenty years ago, Houston, jealous of neighboring Louisiana, had a local design competition that called for the creation of a distinctive Texas style. I won first prize because I took that joke seriously and designed a house in the form of a cowboy's head. Perhaps that's what your magazine should do — organize a state-wide competition for the New England Yankee style.

Anatol Zukerman NCARB
Newton, Massachusetts

It was a pleasure to read Jeff Stein's interview with Nasser Rabbat [September/October 2005], not just for personal reasons (it brought back fond memories of the course that I co-taught with Nasser for many years at MIT), but because the professional design community needs a conversation of this kind more than ever today.

At a time when design practices are increasingly more global, the general lack of information (and the abundance of misinformation) about other places, cultures, and architectures (Islam in particular) is often appalling. What is so refreshing about the interview is that it calls for a critical and cosmopolitan perspective with which to approach "other" architectural traditions.

Challenging the common view of Islamic architecture as a self-contained and fundamentally different tradition known to Westerners only by its "otherness," Rabbat brings the Islamic tradition back into the fold of world architecture by highlighting shared roots in classical Mediterranean civilizations. Such cross-cultural premises provoke many further questions: Can one look at, say, an 18th-century Ottoman Baroque Mosque in Istanbul and still talk about European and Islamic architecture as two separate traditions? If identities are always composite and always in flux, does it even matter who influenced whom? Is "influence" always about a dominant party giving its cultural goods to an inferior "other," or is it a creative exchange that involves interaction and choice?

One can also ask in reverse: Is "Western civilization" itself as pure, distinct, and self-contained as typically assumed? John Hobson, for one, says "no" in his recent *Eastern Origins of Western Civilization*. Similarly: "What can be more 'English' than a cup of tea?" asks Stuart Hall polemically ("Old and New Identities" in *Culture, Globalization and the World System*) only to remind us that it is tea from India, China, or Ceylon and sugar from the Caribbean that are the ingredients in this "Englishness."

If there is no real history of "the West" without the histories of "others," are we going to embrace these intertwined histories of exchange, influence, interaction, and hybridization that have united cultures (and architectures) across vast geographies, or are we going to confine ourselves to essentialist myths of cultural and national identity that continue to divide them? These are all profound questions for everyone to ponder, and *ArchitectureBoston*'s special issue on "Identity" is an excellent start.

Sibel Bozdogan, PhD
Boston Architectural Center
Boston

In her discussion of "Density 2: Rethinking the Urban Village" [September/October 2005], Kimberly Jones says "architects and planners need catharsis as much as anyone." "Catharsis" is a Greek word describing a hero's recognition of his or her tragic flaw and consequential cleansing of the impurity. I don't think that is what she meant. I think she meant that she wanted us to have more conversation with community representatives about the advantages of mixed-income housing in high-density development and why they are so resistant to it.

Maybe Ms. Jones is unfamiliar with MassHousing's $6-billion portfolio of mixed-income rental and single-family housing, or the Federal Home Loan Bank of Boston's mixed-income portfolio. The conference planners don't see themselves as heroes, and we didn't bill the event as a community forum. What we intended was a conversation internal to the profession, to more deeply explore some of the ramifications of density. In case she hadn't noticed, we had outstanding financial support from Massachusetts banks. What is damaging about her critique is the chill it sends up the spine and through the pocketbooks of those who, through direct donation or *pro bono* work, generously sponsored the event. Missing the overarching value of the event really stings for those who sincerely tried to bring something fresh to the discussion. Can we count on *ArchitectureBoston* to underwrite the cost of the next conference? If money is something you cannot contribute, perhaps you could provide the space for a roundtable with the developers, architects, and other planning professionals involved in the event to discuss the emerging perspective on compact mixed-income, mixed-use development. Unlike Ms. Jones, they found the event a positive demonstration of how design professionals can work together advocating for sustainable community design.

Diane Georgopulos FAIA
MassHousing
Boston

Editor's note: Kimberly Jones' acknowledgment of the sponsors was cut from her text for space reasons. In addition to the BSA, they included: MassHousing; the Federal Home Loan Bank of Boston; Northeastern University; the AIA Center for Communities by Design; and 14 other supporting corporations and institutions. Jones responds:

Indeed, this was a valuable gathering, organized by individuals committed most impressively to the best of goals. My review contained reactions I felt might further our shared cause of creating good communities.

I am writing to express my thanks to the BSA and the other hosts and sponsors of "Rethinking the Urban Village." As Deputy Chief of Staff for Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley, I coordinate six city departments with a singular vision of making Chicago economically and physically a sustainable city role model. The most important contribution I can make to that end is to promote smart-growth initiatives in the city. "Rethinking the Urban Village" provided me with a valuable forum to confer with my planning peers from around the country and leaders in finance, design, development, and other fields about the opportunities and challenges inherent in adapting a rich heritage of urban neighborhoods to the needs and aspirations of a 21st-century city. A conference such as this provides a great opportunity to learn from the experiences of other disciplines and municipalities.

Samuel Assefa
Deputy Chief of Staff
Office of the Mayor
Chicago

Correction: The project shown in the photo on page 18 (right) of our September/October issue was designed by over,under.

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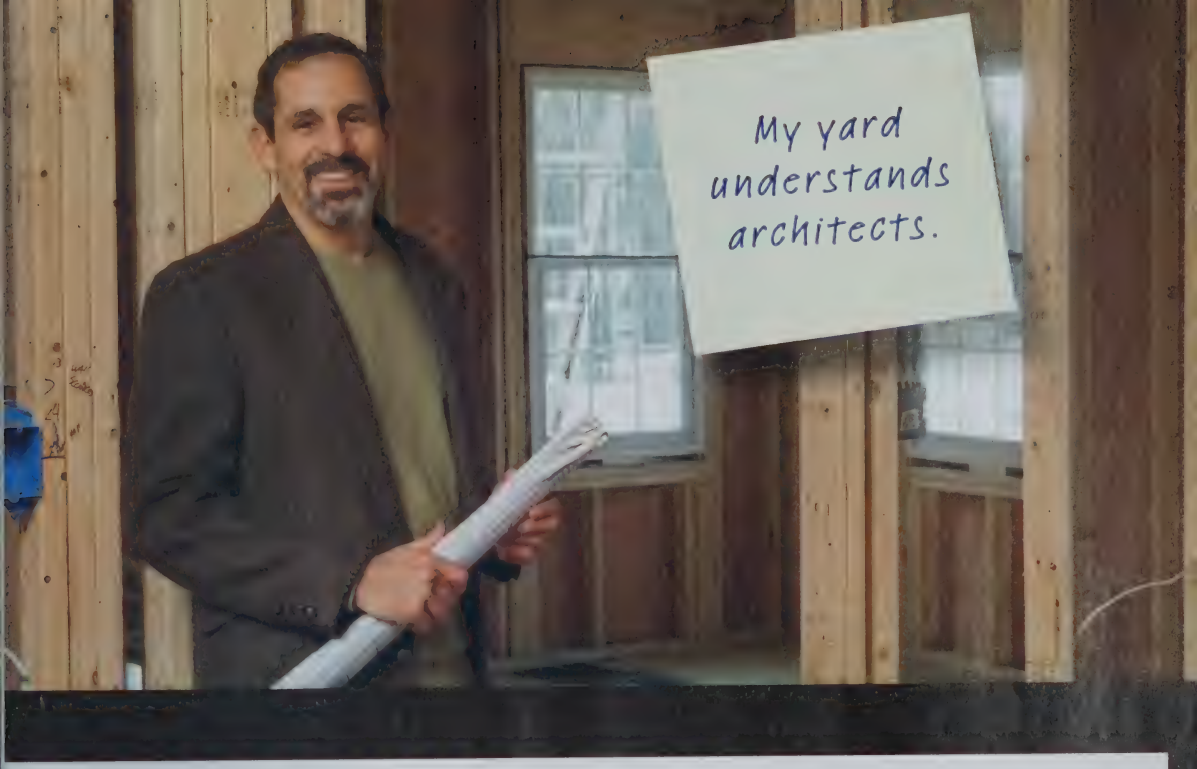
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Robert Smithson: Mirror Displacement (Cayuga Salt Mine Project), 1969/2004.

Robert Smithson

Whitney Museum of American Art
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Andy Goldsworthy. Martha Schwartz. Adrian Geuze. Alex MacLean. Maya Lin. It's difficult to think of anyone who makes art of the land today who hasn't been influenced by Robert Smithson.

Smithson created an extraordinary breadth of work in a short time: he died in 1973 at age 35, in a plane crash while scouting a site. Generally called an "earthworks" artist, he's remembered most for being the first to bring the site into the museum, as well as taking art out to the site. After being underwater for many years, Smithson's most famous work, *Spiral Jetty*, is now visible again in the Great Salt Lake.

Organized by the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, *Robert Smithson* is the first major retrospective of his work. Walking through the Whitney galleries, a visitor might not realize that the work, representing an astonishing range of media, was created by one person. Smithson's figurative early work quickly evolves into work of optical effects, which soon matures into work that the spectator must become part of to complete. Human beings are part of, but not the center of, Smithson's universe.

The exhibit text is minimal; it simply identifies the pieces, with some quotations from Smithson. The attempt is to let the artist's voice come through, which is understandable but tricky; during my visit, the catalogue and a knowledgeable docent helped it all make sense.

If one remembers only one word of Smithson's, it's this: entropy. Often made of organic materials, these pieces — like the landscapes they're part of — are always in flux and will never be seen in exactly the same way twice. The result is a challenge for curators and conservators, but a fascinating experience for the viewer.

Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA, teaches the architecture studios at Smith College and works with Rogers Marvel Architects in New York City.

My Father, the Genius

Directed by Lucia Small
DVD, 84 minutes
2005, small angst films

In *My Father, the Genius*, filmmaker Lucia Small reintroduces the world to her father, Glen Howard Small, a narcissist who believes he can "save the world through architecture." Glen Howard Small made a splash in the late 1960s with his biologically inspired, sustainable, utopian designs and is clearly an architect with extraordinary vision. But behind every revolutionary design idea exists the petulant man who abruptly walked out on his family and has forsaken nearly every colleague. Penniless at 61, he charges his daughter with documenting his odd legacy, from which this charming, thoughtful film arises.

Understandably then, Lucia Small's film seems wary of conferring on her father the title of "genius," irreverently questioning whether an architect whose remarkable ideas remain unbuilt merits such a moniker. More profoundly, it also questions the filial fidelity owed to a self-described "genius" never interested in family, only in saving the world.

Kevin Neary works for the Boston Society of Architects.



Peter Rose FAIA

Conversations on Architecture

The Boston Society of Architects
June 14, 2005

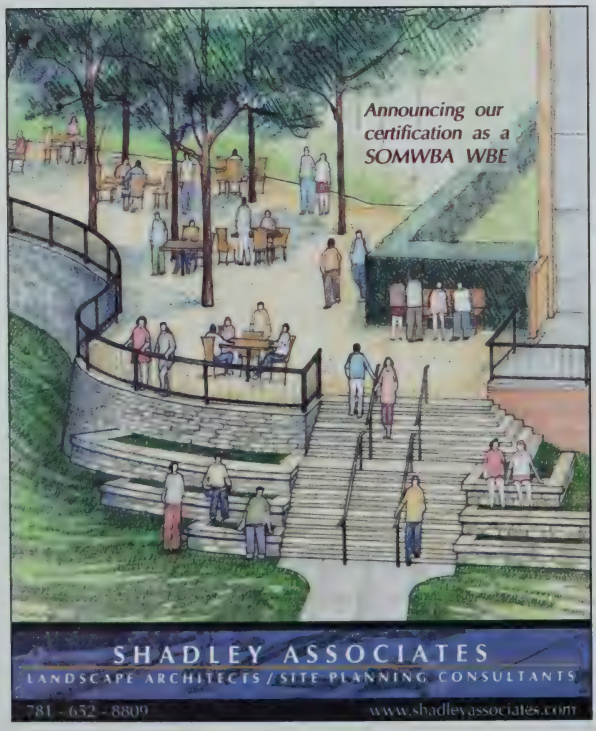
There is no question that Peter Rose is an exceptional architect. He is also an exceptionally frustrated architect. Perhaps his Canadian heritage has made it hard for him to sit by while this country becomes increasingly suburban, conservative, and privatized.

His presentation of current projects at a recent BSA Conversations program quickly led to a heated discussion of recent studio work at the Harvard Graduate School of Design: the deconstruction and analysis of Boston's subway system where three transit lines intersect. Under his tutelage, students built astonishingly detailed computer simulations and physical models of what happens above and below grade between the Charles River and Downtown Crossing.

Rose believes that good underground transportation networks lead to dynamic and multi-cultural cities. He should know. His career was made when, at the tender age of 40, he won a competition to refashion the Old Port in Montreal. In 1982, the waterfront was a post-industrial graveyard for grain silos and sheds (documented by Le Corbusier), which were cut off from the city by 40 feet of abandoned train tracks. Rose's plan saved the great silos from demolition, and today they're the first things you see when you approach Montreal from the southeast. His decision to protect, celebrate, and even illuminate these early modern colossuses prevented the waterfront from becoming an insipid, benched, and bricked "anywhere."

Known as the designer of the impressive Canadian Centre for Architecture, Rose left Canada in the '90s to teach at Harvard. He has brought his idealism with him. He wants to know why no one looks at the public transportation system here as a work in progress, rather than a barely functioning irritation. He wants to know why Canadian architects are so involved in planning and politics, while American architects wait for the commissions to come. Proving that Americans are pragmatists, everyone in attendance recommended that Rose become an activist right here in Boston to turn ideas into action. If you agree with Rose that Boston is hardly a finished and perfect piece of work, then you should give him a call. He's looking for a small flock to ruffle some feathers.

Rachel Levitt is a designer and writer.



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A Final Thesis Crit



The degree candidate: Adriana Ramacciotti, a graduate student at the Boston Architectural Center, who is preparing for an evening presentation of her master's thesis project. For the past few months, she's been in the studio until 11 or 12 every night. Like most BAC students, she also works full-time at an architectural firm.

The setting: A narrow classroom at the BAC, crammed with chairs. Adriana's site model occupies a table at the front. A delicate model of the building, with every louver intricately represented, sits on another table off to one side.

The thesis project: An arts center for the town of Belmont, which includes exhibition, studio, and living spaces, as well as a restaurant and indoor and outdoor theaters.

The afternoon and evening:

3:15 Adriana is pinning up plans and elevations on the walls. Her father, an urban planner from Argentina who has come to spend the week with her, is straightening the rows of chairs.

3:26 Her friend Rick arrives. She hugs him. "I'm so tired. So, so tired."

"You're doing better than I was at this stage," Rick says. "I was still coloring drawings as I was carrying them down the hall."

4:40 Adriana tacks up one last drawing. "I didn't have time to do another view of this."

"Don't say that in your presentation," Rick warns. "Don't say anything negative."

4:50 Adriana's boyfriend, Jerome, strides in, carrying coolers and big boxes of food. Adriana spreads a cloth over a table at the back of the room, and they lay out enormous platters of canapes, fruit, and cheese. "You brought too many cookies," Adriana says suddenly.

"You asked me to bring cookies."

"But this is enough cookies for the entire school."

5:10 Adriana walks to a nearby convenience store, for ice to chill the champagne Jerome has brought. On the way back, in the elevator, she runs into a tall man carrying two tall cups of coffee. Adriana asks, "So how's he doing?"

The tall guy shakes his head. "He's nervous. I told him that he's a lot further along at this stage than I was."

"It's tomorrow?"

The tall guy nods. "I told him, 'It's amazing what you can get done in the last 12 hours.'"

5:25 In the darkened classroom, Adriana starts rehearsing her PowerPoint presentation. The title slide is on the screen: "COMMUNICATING THROUGH WALLS." She looks at it. "What do I say about this?"

Rick: "'Welcome to my thesis.'"

5:40 Adriana is working on her introduction. "I need to say that people make culture, and this center responds to the neighborhood and the moving vista of people...."

Her friend Luciana shows up and looks around the room. "You might want to get rid of some chairs."

5:50 Adriana runs through her talk several times. Rick and Luciana ask questions and prompt her: "Who are the users?" "It might be good to refer to the model when you talk about the louver system." Her father gestures to her to speed up. Her face is tense and flushed. She notices that the pedestrian bridge isn't shown clearly on the drawing, and darkens it with a pencil. "And I just realized the plan doesn't show the street."

Luciana: "Don't say that."

Rick: "Ix-nay. Ix-nay. Point to the edge of the plan and say, 'Waverly Street is here.'"

Jerome: "Look, you can't keep stopping. Just do your stuff like we're not even here."

6:29 Adriana has kicked everyone out and sits alone with the door shut, starting the talk again, muttering, "What is our feeling when we walk by walls, see through them, use them? These are the questions that led to the concept diagram...."

6:55 She suddenly decides the room is too crowded, and carries out half the chairs.

7:03 A woman arrives for the presentation and greets Adriana and Jerome with kisses. The room begins to fill with people.

7:13 A man wishes Adriana luck, walks past the model of the building — and knocks it to the floor. A splintering noise: the glass roof breaks off. "Oh, my God," he says, "I am so sorry."

"No, no, no, please. Don't worry, it's fine." Adriana is kneeling, trying to smile, gathering pieces in her hands.

7:14 Rick runs to the studio for a bottle of glue.

7:18 Adriana unobtrusively glues the roof back on.

7:31 "Good evening, everybody," Adriana begins. There are about 20 people in the room now: other students; friends; Adriana's boss from work. The critics, sitting near the front of the room, include her thesis advisor; her thesis representative, who has been overseeing the project to make sure it meets the BAC's requirements; and a Belmont architect who has been acting as the client. Adriana turns off the lights and delivers her PowerPoint presentation, introducing the site and explaining the building, its design and rationale. Her talk is poised and organized, incorporating all the points her friends have prompted her on this afternoon.

7:52 Adriana wraps up her introduction, and turns the lights back on. "Feel free to ask questions."

Her thesis representative says, "I'd like to know what our client thinks."

The client: "Have you done a cost estimate on this?"

Adriana: "I'm assuming around 10 million."

7:55 The thesis representative asks Adriana to talk more about the importance of the walls. "Why this particular mix of materials?"

Adriana explains that the dramatic sculptural glass walls occur in the most public spaces — the gallery and restaurant. "The walls are talking. These, on the studios" — she points to the louvered sections of the model — "aren't saying much. These are quiet, these are private. This is where the work is happening."

8:00 The client says, "I see a fourth floor."

Adriana nods. "Duplex units, for families."

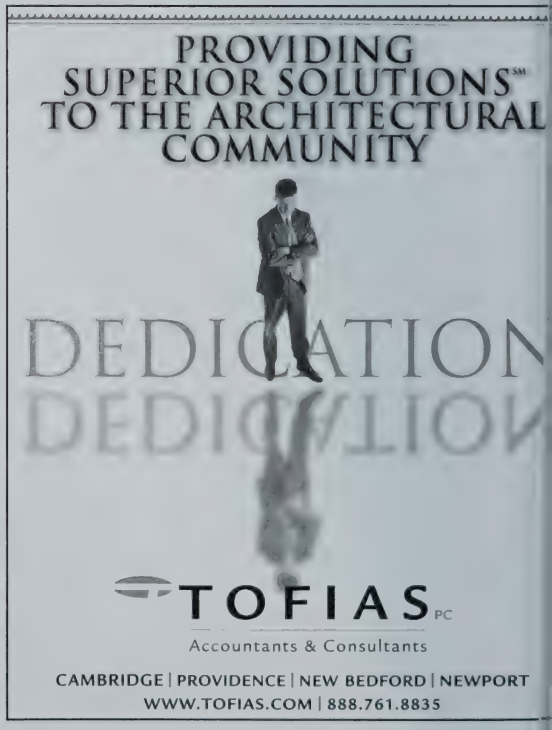
The client squints at the interior elevation. "Is that a corridor?"

"Yes. You can hang your art, and people can walk by for exhibitions."

"You also have people walking by and looking into your bedroom." The client points at the windows piercing the wall between the residences and the corridor.

Adriana: "I took that into account when I determined the height of the windows. But those windows are important, to take advantage of the light."





8:06 One of the critics suggests that larger doors on the individual units would help the residential and studio spaces spill out to the building's open space. "I think it's an easy conversion. You're assuming artists live in an orderly bourgeois way — work here, live there. But what they really want is space that's flexible."

8:20 The client questions the lack of internal access from the building's third-floor residences to the third-floor workspaces in the opposite wing. "What if I want to work at night?"

Adriana: "You have to go outside."

"I might find that a frustrating way to go back and forth."

Adriana says firmly, "I thought interior security was more important."

8:24 A critic points out that the black-box theater only has one exit, although two are required. "I can put another one here," Adriana says, pointing at the plan.

"But that's the residential section. What about privacy?"

Adriana looks at the plan for a long moment, then nods. "I'll have to think more about how to solve it."

8:35 A sudden stern voice from the audience. Rick. "I think it's a weakness that your central wall doesn't show up well on the plan." Adriana looks startled at this unsolicited severity, but Rick's critique turns out to be a ploy, to set up the praise he delivers next, in the same gruff tone: "Because, really, the design of your central wall is *so powerful* that you want it to show up clearly on the plan."

Adriana takes the cue, explaining that the thick central wall allows a bike path to go through perforated openings, "so you can pass through the building even when the building isn't open."

8:39 The thesis representative begins to sum up. "Maybe you need a few more quick diagrams clarifying and explaining the idea of the wall. But it's there — the design is exciting and sensitive. We've been picking on it, but you should be congratulated."

"I agree," the client says. "Very successful. I didn't mean to pick on —"

"No, that's OK," Adriana says.

"I actually think we should show this to the town board of selectmen and get a discussion going."

Adriana smiles. "I would love that."

"But it's important to figure out things like fire exits first, because they'll notice. They'll say, 'It's a death trap,' and they'll get stuck on that and never really look at your concept."

8:44 "Nice project," one of the critics says in conclusion. Applause.

8:45 Adriana says to Rick, with obvious relief, "I defended."

"You sure did," he agrees, putting his arms around her.

From the back of the room, a series of muffled happy explosions, as Jerome uncorks the champagne. ■

Joan Wickersham lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts.



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Participants

Janice Mancini Del Sesto is the general director of the Boston Lyric Opera, which presents a full season in the Schubert Theatre. The BLO made history in September 2002 when its production of *Carmen* on Boston Common played to 140,000 people in two evenings.

George Emlen is a freelance conductor, composer, and arranger, and is the music director of Revels, a performing arts company specializing in celebrating the seasons, now in its 35th year.

Barnaby Evans is an artist in Providence, Rhode Island, and is the creator of WaterFire, a regularly scheduled, multi-media "fire sculpture" installation that attracts up to 65,000 people on a single night. He was a 2003–2004 artist in residence at MIT.

Elizabeth Padjen FAIA is the editor of *ArchitectureBoston*.

Bryan Rafanelli is the president of Rafanelli Events, a leading producer of corporate, nonprofit, and private events, based in Boston and Palm Beach. He studied architecture at the Boston Architectural Center.

Janet Marie Smith, an architect and planner, is vice president of planning and development for the Boston Red Sox.

Joe Spaulding is president and CEO of the Wang Center for the Performing Arts, which offers theatre, concerts, film, dance, and opera in the 3,600-seat Wang Theatre and the 1,500-seat Shubert Theatre.

Elizabeth Padjen: The city in our society seems to be at a turning point. No one really has to live or work in a city any more; people now tend to be there by choice. As we reinvent the role of the city in the 21st century, it might be valuable to consider the connection between pleasure and cities — the physical, sensuous pleasure of being in the city.

We tend to think about the city in terms of a collection of constituent industries, which in our minds are somehow segmented. You individually represent the culture industry, the sports industry, the tourism industry, the performing-arts industry, the hospitality industry. What would happen if we said instead that all of you together represent the pleasure industry? What if you all belonged to one trade association? Hotels, restaurants, spas, museums, galleries, even shops and pushcart vendors might be members, too. Each of you helps to shape the way people experience life in the urban environment. You give them a reason to be there: the pursuit of pleasure. And because you tend to work closely with so many people — people we might call the consumers of the city — you know things that urban designers and planners don't know.

What is your sense of Boston's capacity for pleasure? There is admittedly an oxymoronic aspect to this. Do Bostonians need to work on having fun?

Barnaby Evans: The Puritan dourness still echoes along the stone façades. Things have changed a lot, but it's still there.

Bryan Rafanelli: We're a closeted pleasure city. There are people here who might spend $2,000 per person on a party with



"I live on the waterfront, I walk 10 minutes to my office, I shop in the North End, and I can walk to Back Bay in 20 minutes. The experience is rejuvenating."

— Janice Mancini Del Sesto

extraordinary features, artists, performers. Anything that's unique, that money can buy, they want. Would you know that that's happening here? No. But it is.

Janice Mancini Del Sesto: I might be one of the people, as you suggest, who shape the experience of the city, but I'm also a consumer of it. I live on the waterfront, I walk 10 minutes to my office, I shop in the North End, and I can walk to Back Bay in 20 minutes. The experience is rejuvenating, and other people are discovering that, too. I'm finding that more people say they want to move back into the city — for the pleasure of that experience and lifestyle.

George Emlen: Our greatest asset is that we're mixed-use and compact — the city offers a huge variety of things to do in a relatively small geographic area. The challenge will be taking that to the next level and incorporating that character into new parts of the city. The Rose Kennedy Greenway, for example, presents an enormous opportunity for mixed use — being able to eat, shop, discover cultural opportunities, enjoy the physical environment, socialize, watch people.

Bryan Rafanelli: What's fascinating about all these opportunities is that suddenly we're a city that offers lots of choices, and now the challenge is to help everybody understand what they are and help them choose.

Joe Spaulding: And encourage them to participate. Once they do, they start talking about it. You can see the effect of that energy when you go to a Red Sox game and see what has happened on Lansdowne Street. It's unbelievable.

Janet Marie Smith: Fenway Park always had the reputation as an idyllic neighborhood ball park. So when I arrived here and began trying to figure out who our natural allies were in our pursuit to save Fenway, it was stunning to me that the entertainment businesses that were so naturally aligned with us were viewed as such a negative by the city — by residents, by universities that didn't want their students hanging out in clubs. Every city in this country that I've worked in has tried to please its sports and entertainment industry. Here, it was considered a nuisance.

We extended an olive branch to the neighboring clubs and said, "Look, our beer trucks aren't bothering you and your concert-loading isn't bothering us; why can't we work on this together?" It was amazing how quickly those businesses began to transform from late-night clubs into restaurants with full kitchens and sidewalk dining. All it took was a little bit of investment in the streetscape, and the city's willingness to give permits for sidewalk use. Still, it's a marvelous city. It amazes me that there's not a deeper appreciation of what's here.

Joe Spaulding: We think of ourselves as the Athens of America, but we don't know how to tell people about it or help them participate in the life of the city. It's an issue even for those who live in the city — how do we encourage them not to sit at home and watch a 52-inch flat-screen TV, to get out and experience something first-hand?

Elizabeth Padjen: I suspect that all of you are facing competition from sophisticated home media systems. If I watch a Red Sox game at home, I actually see much more of the game. I can rent a really good opera DVD and watch it at home. Even parties and events face competition when busy people decide they would much rather stay at home and watch their flat screens in their jammies. What can you do to hype the live experience, to encourage people to leave the house? How conscious are you of the need to choreograph the experience to make it special?

Janet Marie Smith: People are actually very social creatures, and that's one of the most hopeful indicators for cities. One of the wonderful things about sports is that they offer one of the few places people go to for the purpose of congregating with people they don't know. One of the reasons cities are reinventing themselves not as centers of commerce or places to live but as urban entertainment centers, is that we all at some level think that sort of interaction is fun; it feeds that social craving most people have.

That's part of what we try to do with the Red Sox — create an engine for making that social interaction happen. You can't always count on winning, so you have to create an environment that people simply want to be in, regardless of what happens after they cross the turnstile.

Joe Spaulding: With our Radio City Christmas production last winter, we had 229,000 people in 29 days over 60 performances, and 50 percent of them had never been to the Wang Center. One of our goals is to get those people to come back to experience live theater. We are constantly thinking about how to re-engineer ourselves to provide pleasure with the different pieces we do. The arts keep us a civilized nation, and I think people appreciate that experience.

Janice Mancini Del Sesto: One of the things we're trying to do is to expand the opera experience by making the experience of going

into the city fun. How do we help patrons find the easiest and cheapest parking? How do we make it feel like something very special, from the second they walk in the door? Opera tends to be more interactive than, say, ballet or symphony, in that you laugh, you cry, you clap. There's stimulation on a number of levels — the staging, the music, the story. How can we heighten that experience?

When we did *Carmen* on the Common, the first fully staged free opera in Boston, we expected 5,000 to 10,000 people a night — and got 65,000 people the first night, and 75,000 the second. We had giant screens, supertitles in English, study guides in six languages; we'd done previews all over the city. Something in the way we promoted it caused it to become a major event. I'll never forget the young guy stuck in a cab for about half an hour, trying to get across town. The driver said, "Opera's on the Common," and suggested he get out and walk because they weren't getting anywhere. The guy thought the driver said, "Oprah's on the Common," so he figured he might as well go over and see Oprah. He showed up — it was a sea of people — and said, "I understand Oprah's here." One of our volunteers said, "No, but opera is." He decided to give it a try. And then came back the second night.

Joe Spaulding: Why did 93,000 people come to see our *Hamlet* on the Common? It's a tough Shakespeare play, and it's hard to present well. I was amazed at the diversity of the audience — all races, lots of young people on their blankets, everybody comfortable. We need to provide an equivalent experience indoors as well. The hard part of that is getting people to pay for it.

Barnaby Evans: One form of social interaction is the sense of *communitas* that comes when we're all gathered together. I sometimes think that's what people are most looking for when they come to Providence to see WaterFire. Joseph Campbell writes that people aren't looking for the meaning of life, they're looking to feel alive. And somehow, experiencing the multi-sensory impact of diverse sounds, smells, interactions, and emotions with a group of people as part of an almost ritualistic gathering is very powerful.

Elizabeth Padjen: Perhaps some of the success of *Carmen* and *Hamlet* on the Common is that they recast the perceptions some people have of certain art forms — that they're boring, they're stuffy. And yet the tradition of gathering to view a performance resonates across many cultures. I suspect one reason for the popularity of Revels, for example, is that it draws on those traditions. It seems to draw on a very primal recollection of a certain kind of pleasure in ritual.

George Emlen: I don't know whether it's about ritual and tradition or whether it's simply the visceral pleasure of experiencing the confluence of sound and color and light. People do seem to want to be among other people in a place where something exciting and interesting is happening. Here in Boston, we've got a lot of the pieces of the puzzle in place already, but we need to lower the obstacles. We have to reduce the ticket prices in some instances. We have to make it easy to get in and out of the city. And we need to provide decent parking.

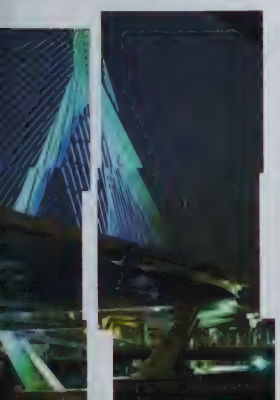
Janet Marie Smith: Having worked here for three years now, I'm still baffled by one thing: the city can be such a help, but then there are so many little stumbling blocks along the way. For example, if you want a mixed-use, vibrant neighborhood, but you can't get a liquor license, your only candidate restaurants are fast-food joints. If you really want to create a lively urban atmosphere, some of the restrictions have to change.

Elizabeth Padjen: You all are talking about an entire experience, not just an event — an experience that extends well before and after an event in both space and time in order to create a complete environment that is somehow pleasurable. I suppose the theatre district itself is an example — there's the experience of eating, walking, and milling about before and after a performance that is itself a multi-sensory experience.

George Emlen: And, of course, if the environment works well on that level, you don't even need a performance. It will attract people on its own.

Elizabeth Padjen: Let's talk about pleasurable experiences of the city that have nothing to do with performances and events.

Barnaby Evans: Walking along Newbury Street can be delightful. It's a little predictable and corporate now, but you can go to a gallery, you can sit outside at a restaurant. You can't get a place to park, but never mind that.



"Almost one in three Bostonians was born outside the United States. So, those of us who are entertainment programmers have to think very differently from the way we thought 10 years ago. It's pushed us to do some exciting things."

— Joe Spaulding



"I think walking is key to experiencing the pleasures of the city — it allows you to interact with the texture and detail of city life."

— Barnaby Evans

Joe Spaulding: Harborwalk is amazing — you can follow a walkway all the way from Cambridge down along by the Museum of Science, through what was the old Big Dig site, all around the harbor, then all the way out to Castle Island.

Barnaby Evans: I think walking is key to experiencing the pleasures of the city — it allows you to interact with the texture and detail of city life. And then there are all the subtle social interactions — the silent dance-like right-of-way negotiations create a ballet that enlivens the street.

Elizabeth Padjen: Let me throw senses at you. For example, smell: give me some examples of pleasurable smells in the city.

Joe Spaulding: Food and flowers at sidewalk vendors.

Janice Mancini Del Sesto: The smell of the sea air.

Barnaby Evans: Perfume, when a woman walks by — there's an invisible trail that follows her, revealing her presence.

George Emlen: I agree with Jan — the scent of the ocean does it for me.

Elizabeth Padjen: Let's try sound. Most people say they hate city noise. What are good sounds in the city?

George Emlen: The obvious things are street musicians. And I don't see them much in Boston except in the subway, but I do see them in Cambridge. There is delight in the unexpected — coming across somebody playing an accordion with the case open and coins tossed inside. I've stopped and listened in disbelief at some of the talent that I hear. It is nice to come around a corner and hear a fiddle playing. That to me is a real sensual pleasure.

Janice Mancini Del Sesto: People say the sounds of the airport bother them, but they make me feel more alive because I'm a part of what's happening all around me. I feel the same way about the sounds of the foghorn or the ships coming in.

Barnaby Evans: The sound of the rain in the city is gorgeous. Water splashing in fountains. Birds. People's voices.

George Emlen: I don't think of this city as a loud city. You don't hear horns here, the way you do in LA, New York, Miami.

Joe Spaulding: Or the sound of nothing, which is what I heard recently in Pittsburgh. There was nobody there.

Elizabeth Padjen: Taste.

Janice Mancini Del Sesto: Street food and vendors. But we now also have wonderful, sophisticated restaurants. When I first came to Boston, there were only two places for a fancy dinner or a business lunch: Locke-Ober or the Ritz.

George Emlen: There are also pleasurable memories of taste: the sundaes at Bailey's.

Bryan Rafanelli: I'm thinking taste level, too. The taste level of the city — in all things — is skyrocketing in terms of sophistication.

George Emlen: We probably still labor under the reputation of baked beans and cod.

Joe Spaulding: That's changed a lot.

George Emlen: And now we have a multiplicity of ethnic food. Ethiopian, Moroccan, whatever you want.

Janice Mancini Del Sesto: And that's because of the backgrounds of the people who now live here who have opened those kinds of restaurants. That's contributed to a new culture of pleasure.

Elizabeth Padjen: Several of you have mentioned that the city has changed. Have Bostonians themselves changed? Or are you seeing greater influence and participation by people who have moved here?

Joe Spaulding: I've heard that almost one in three Bostonians was born outside the United States. So, those of us who are entertainment programmers have to think very differently from the way we thought 10 years ago, in terms of what we are producing and how we reach those audiences. It's pushed us to do some exciting things.

Janice Mancini Del Sesto: When we did the study guide for *Carmen on the Common*, we asked some community leaders what languages we should use in translations. In addition to English, we provided Vietnamese, Chinese, Russian, Spanish, and French, for the Caribbean island people. A couple of decades ago, you didn't see

people in traditional ethnic dress, but now you do. That sort of diversity is changing the experience of the city for the better.

Elizabeth Padjen: Some people would say that some of the activities and events we've been discussing are elitist — ticket prices or perceived class associations bar some people from participating in them. There is nevertheless the opportunity to create a shared, pleasurable experience that serves as a common ground for everybody. Common ground in itself can be a pleasurable experience — witness the success of Downtown Crossing and Fenway/Kenmore Square. How do we create environments that are accessible to all?

Joe Spaulding: I would say that we are not elitist at all, because each of us is part of a collaborative effort to reach out into the community. If Bryan's "exclusive" fund-raising party gets people of means to contribute a ton of money to a nonprofit organization, and that effort then allows us to offer free performances of *Carmen* or Shakespeare, then that's a very good thing. No doubt, $474 tickets to see the Rolling Stones at Fenway Park are pretty exclusive. But the Red Sox Foundation is helping out with all sorts of efforts in the community. I think that people in Boston collaborate and partner and think outside the box better than anywhere else I've been.

Barnaby Evans: What is interesting is that when art forms that might be considered elitist, like opera or Shakespeare, are brought into the public sphere outdoors, they are enormously successful. They're open to anyone, so you get over that inertia where people might not feel comfortable going into a theatre, and you generate great excitement.

George Emlen: Our Revels solution is to present a free outdoor summer show on the solstice. What we put on stage is reflected in what we see in our audience. We do a Chinese element, a Brazilian element. This year we had a captivating Tibetan performer. Kids from Jamaica Plain came up and performed pre-Hispanic dances from Mexico. It was riveting because it was real. People are bringing their own cultural traditions to our stage, and we were enabling them and at the same time expanding our audience, because it included friends of the people who were on stage. And because the show happened to be right on the Harborwalk, people who were just passing through stopped out of curiosity and stayed to watch.

Barnaby Evans: With WaterFire, we quite deliberately use high-fidelity recorded music, for several reasons. One is that it allows us to have tremendous musical diversity: you can go from gospel to opera to ancient Norwegian in the flash of an eye. But the other aspect is that, as part of an effort to create a civic engagement with people, I want to break down the sense of an audience seated with all eyes forward watching a performance on stage, and instead create a live urban environment where all the participants are part of the experience. There's too much of a passive audience culture in America, maybe from our watching television so much, that you don't see in Europe. By presenting music without a performer, my hope is that somehow the people walking through this urban environment feel that they are each their own agent or are actors creating an experience and contributing to an urban performance.

And I think that it is at least partly successful. I am amused by how often people misinterpret that, assuming we simply can't afford live music. In fact, we do offer live music, such as salsa or the tango festival, but we do it a block away, so people have the freedom to wander and discover things. I think a sense of freedom and flexibility and surprise and innovation are an important part of pleasure in the city.

Elizabeth Padjen: It's almost like treating music as scent — it permeates the entire city.

Barnaby Evans: Yes, and it creates the diversity of experience that people enjoy. It's a great deal of fun to go into an urban square and see hip-hop and living sculpture over here and a sax player and break-dancing over there. William Whyte, the urban sociologist, talks about "triangulation," where two strangers speak to each other about a third element, and the third element is typically, in urban spaces, a performance. Whyte says that what's most successful in breaking down the barriers between those two strangers is a terrible performance. People are comfortable saying, "Boy, this guy's really bad!" Suddenly they're engaged with one another.

George Emlen: Our fall RiverSing is an example of the sort of participatory experience you're describing. The concept is to gather people on both the Boston and the Cambridge sides of the Charles River around sunset on the fall equinox, and they just sing back and forth. We held the first one a year ago, which



"We are all artists transforming a space into a special experience and, in doing that, we are also transforming the city."

— Bryan Rafanelli

I conducted, together with a giant puppet, from the Weeks footbridge. It really worked. It's like environmental art, in a way, working with a natural land form. People loved singing and loved listening for the sound coming back from the other side. We had an incredible, beautiful night; the moon was rising, and people were simply transfixed.

Elizabeth Padjen: Will audiences continue to be satisfied by the sorts of simple pleasures that you've just described? Or will they demand more and more sophisticated technology in order for these outdoor spectacles to continue to attract them?

Bryan Rafanelli: The *Hamlet* on the Common experience was extraordinary. It was state of the art. I'll never forget it. I thought to myself — because people say this to me all the time — wow, this is incredible; what are you going to do next? In my business, you're only as good as your last event, and the bar is constantly getting raised. And yet the best part of that production was simply closing my eyes and listening.

Joe Spaulding: A stage production of Irving Berlin's "White Christmas," based on the movie, is opening at the Wang in December. Technology plays a small but very important role in the experience: it's snowing everywhere — on the stage, in the theater, in the lobby. You might call it a cheap trick, but it is an experience that theater-goers have not had. When I first saw the production in San Francisco, and it started snowing in the theater, tears were streaming down my face — and I'm in the business.

George Emlen: It's technology in the service of a simple experience, so it's a bit of a contradiction. Look at supertitles. They've transformed opera. They're a technological device that we now cannot do without.

Janice Mancini Del Sesto: And the giant screens and sound systems that make productions visible and audible outdoors make outdoor performances a totally different experience, even for those familiar with the work.

Bryan Rafanelli: Technology has its role, but what impressed me with WaterFire was that the simplest experiences were somehow heightened. It was so smart. I was blown away by the music, then the fires. And that's the other side of this. What can we, as artists, come up with that doesn't cost a million dollars, that doesn't require a huge investment in technology?

Barnaby Evans: But even in the midst of all the high-tech wizardry around us, there's still the pleasure of the aroma of a cup of coffee, of something baking in the oven. Fortunately, we still have this almost visceral reaction to very simple experiences, which really ground us.





Elizabeth Padjen: When I think of WaterFire, the first thing that comes to me is an olfactory memory: the scent of the wood smoke.

Barnaby Evans: Many people speak of the pleasure they get from WaterFire's scent of wood smoke. Smell is an extraordinarily powerful sensual input that we often overlook, despite Proust's remembrances. William Morgan, an architectural historian and critic who had been living in Louisville, went up and down the East Coast with his wife, looking for a place to move to. They discovered Providence and WaterFire and loved it and decided to relocate. When they got back home, they wondered if they were crazy to move away from their home of 25 years and considered staying put in Louisville. Then they went up to the bedroom and opened their suitcase and smelled the wood smoke from WaterFire on their packed clothes. They looked at each other and said, "Let's move to Providence." And so they did.

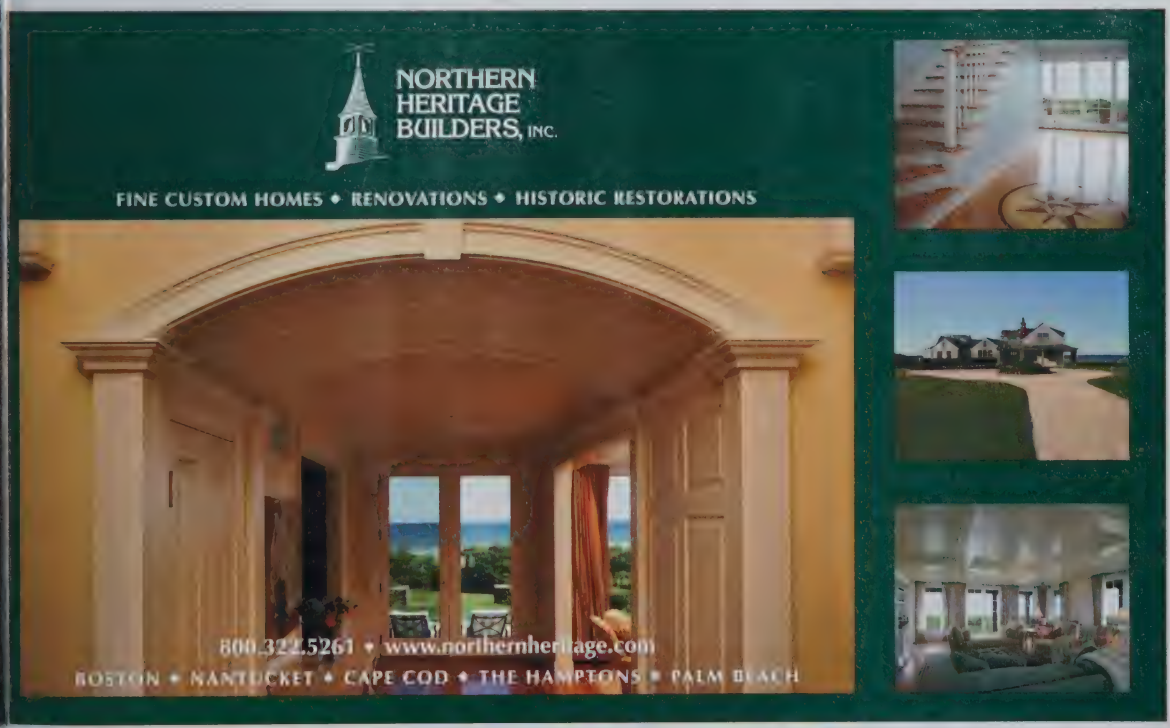
Janice Mancini Del Sesto: I wonder about cities that become known for certain events — is there a downside to success? For example, has WaterFire's success and growth in attendance made it less pleasurable for those who saw it in its earlier incarnation?

Barnaby Evans: There's no doubt that success has changed the nature of the experience. It has become a more festive, communal, social ritual, which has its own pleasures. But we still light the fires until 1 a.m. so people who want to have that more spiritual, quieter experience can still find that after the early crowds have dispersed.

Popularity has been a problem for many European festival cities — they feel the experience has been diluted by the presence of tourists who don't really understand the historical basis of the rituals. Some cities now produce two versions: one on the weekends for the tourists and then at another time, the real version, which often involves many social rituals.

George Emlen: I suspect that may be less of an issue if an event truly grows out of its connection to the place. I suppose that's why I keep thinking of the Rose Kennedy Greenway — that space is so special that it offers an unusual opportunity to reconnect people with the city through the kinds of pleasures we've been discussing.

Bryan Rafanelli: When you were describing RiverSing, you said it was like environmental art. That's a perfect description. It *is* environmental art, and to some degree, that's what we all are doing. Maybe it's a theatre, or a river, or the Boston Common, or an entire city district, or in my case, a hotel ballroom or soundstage or tent in a field. We are all artists transforming a space into a special experience and, in doing that, we are also transforming the city. ▪





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Real Fantasy

Photographs by Timothy Hursley

Read no farther. Instead, look quickly at the following images.

What did you see? A common room in an assisted-living residence; a family rec-room or den; the bedroom of your teenage daughter; the bathroom in a sophisticated loft condo; a previously unpublished Postmodern riff by the late Charles Moore.

In fact, these photographs, all taken by noted architectural photographer Tim Hursley, document some of Nevada's legal brothels. These six images were admittedly chosen for their ordinariness; prostitution of course is not ordinary. But what these places share with many of their more familiar counterparts is that they are designed environments, created for a purpose and incorporating signs and symbols that evoke associations with other places, other contexts. Because Nevada's sex workers typically live on the premises, these facilities are at once commercial stage sets and temporary homes. The question, then, is whether suggestions of luxury, elegance, and down-home comfort appeal more to the customers or to the employees.

Hursley brings a cool objectivity to these scenes, making photographs that are nevertheless compassionate portraits of the invisible women who inhabit them. Classical motifs, comfy trading blankets, hip glass-block, elegant damask, tea sets, Marilyn posters—these are tools of artifice in countless homes across America. Together, these six images are less about the shock of their subject matter and more about the shock of the familiar.

—Elizabeth S. Padjen FAIA

***Brothels of Nevada: Candid Views of America's Legal Sex Industry*, by photographer Timothy Hursley, with text by Alexa Albert, was published in 2004 by Princeton Architectural Press. Hursley's photographs from *Rural Studio: Samuel Mockbee and an Architecture of Decency* (Princeton Architectural Press, 2002) appeared in the Summer 2002 issue of *ArchitectureBoston*.**



Parlor, Shady Lady Ranch, Goldfield, 2002



Girls' Room, Chicken Ranch, 1986



Parlor, Salt Wells Villa, 2002



VIP Room, Old Bridge Ranch, Reno, 2003



Parlor, Resort at Sheri's Ranch. 2002



Playmate Club, 2002

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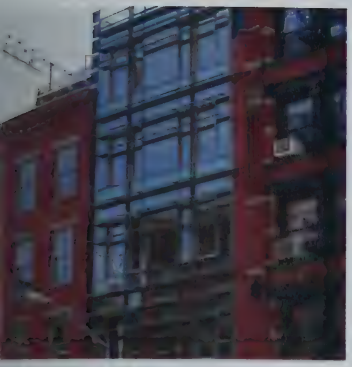
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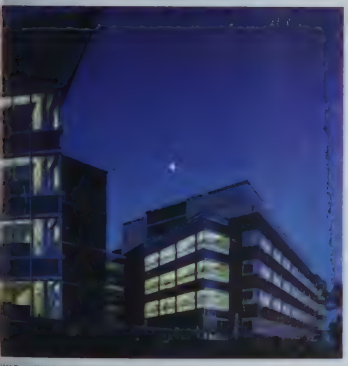




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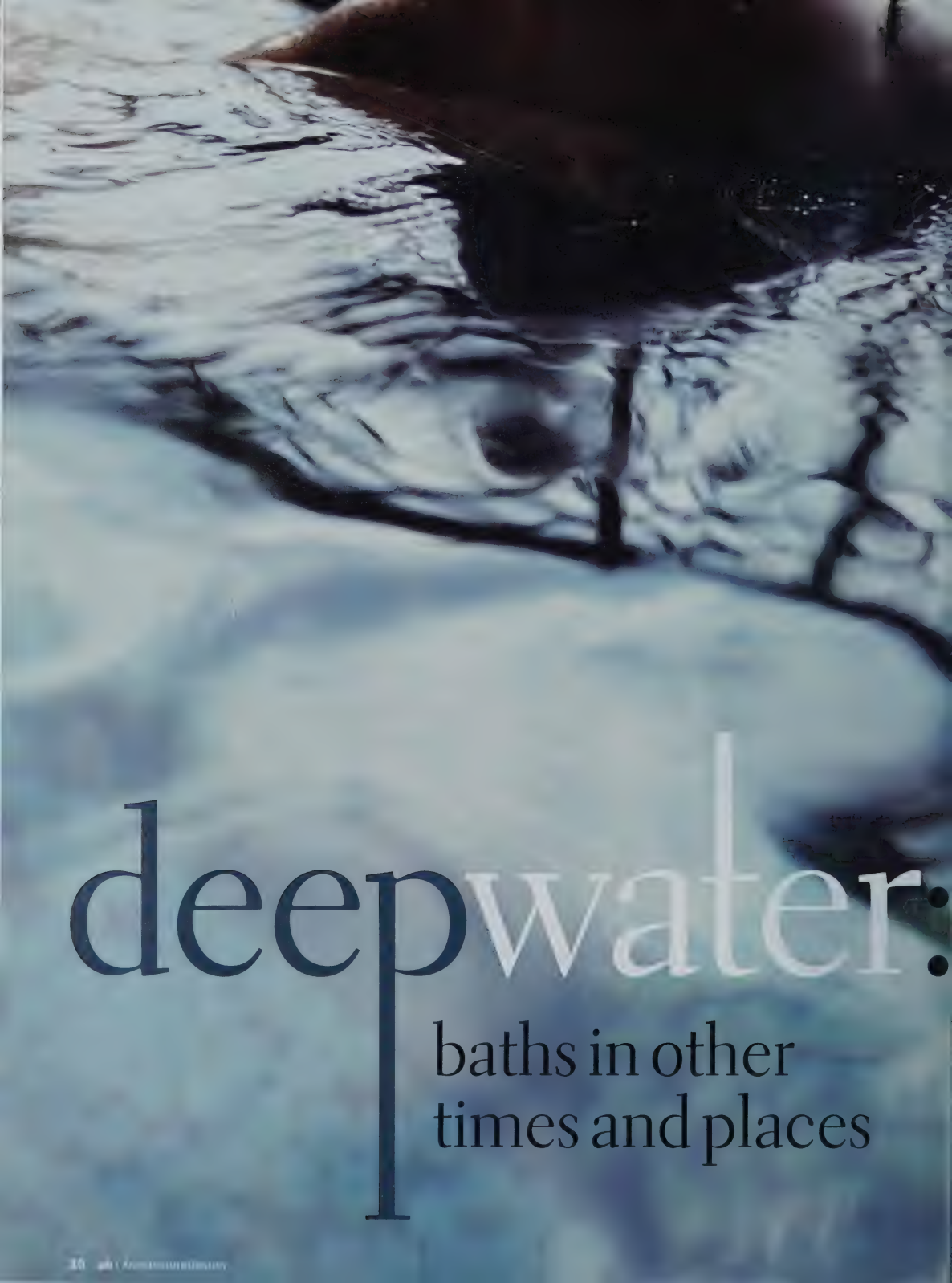


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deep water:

baths in other times and places



By Tamara Roy AIA

Some sensations in life linger in the memory long after they've passed and, for me, many of those have centered around the bath. I can't tell you why for certain, but for those of us for whom water has the power to temporarily quell our tendency to hurry through life, bathing is a welcome source of rejuvenation that we need and pursue. In many places, communal baths add rich layers of social and spiritual meaning to an already potent sensory experience.

Most Americans don't think they have time for baths. Our way of washing — the eight-minute shower — is something we do without noticing, even though we may have a shelf full of scrubs and gels we never get to use. Other cultures place higher value on relaxation than we do, and there is much we can learn from them. There is also an increasing number of spas (i.e. private bath houses) in this country, which suggests that at least some affluent Americans realize the benefit of slower soaking.

Even so, bathing is still seen as an indulgence at odds with centuries of American puritan tradition. Most Americans worry about hygiene and dirty water, or showing their bodies to others. Gay bath houses and common cultural references such as New York's Russian and Turkish baths may have created the perception that bath houses are not part of mainstream American culture. And while spiritual cleansing, in the form of baptisms in many faiths, is very common, it is not generally a ritual that is built into the daily rhythm of adult life.

And yet, there's little question that baths themselves can be pleasurable physically and emotionally. Remember the last time you had a nice bath? (If you only recall the painful scrubbing of hair and feet from your childhood, you're missing something big.) I immediately start to smile at the thought: I've closed the door to the bathroom (very important if you have small children). I've filled the tub, taken off my day's worth of wrinkled business clothes or dirty jeans and I'm standing there, naked, poised to stick my toe in. If it's a cold day, the water is steaming hot, or if it's humid weather, it is cool and refreshing. Sometimes I light candles. Then I slowly, slowly, lower myself in and close my eyes....

One of the very best things about the bath is that you have to *slow down.*

Greek and Roman Public Baths

In the book *Baths and Bathing in Classical Antiquity*, historian Fikret Yegul gives a full portrait of the design, use, funding, administration, and popularity of public bath houses in ancient Greece and Rome. He writes, "[Bathing] went far beyond the functional and hygienic necessities of washing. It was a personal regeneration and a deeply rooted social and cultural

Other cultures place higher value on relaxation than we do, and there is much we can learn from them.

habit — in the full sense of the word, an *institution*." Romans woke up around 5 a.m., worked until noon, lunched, rested, and then went to the public baths around 2 p.m. They would exercise at the baths, where there were running tracks and a gymnasium, and then bathe in cool, marble halls. Then they might attend a lecture — also at the bath house — or go to a banquet. Men and women were assigned separate hours for bathing, using the same facilities. Can you imagine if our days could be structured like that?

At one point in the fifth century, there were 856 public bath houses in Rome alone. Many of the early baths were carved into stone hills and fed by natural springs, conserving water supplies. Local politicians often built and subsidized bath houses, believing that bathing led to contentment as well as the continuation of Roman values. Yegul points out that "barbarians, philosophers... and those (such as Christians) considered to be on the fringes of Roman society because of their beliefs disdained bathing" and that the expansion of Christianity coincided with a severe decline in the number and positive reputation of bath houses in Europe.

Public Baths in Modern Europe

While there are nowhere near 800 baths in Rome today, virtually every European country still has some sort of institutional bathing culture. I once lived in Amsterdam, in a neighborhood that had a public bath, which I visited every week. Many neighborhoods had one, and I liked the fact that it was not exclusive or expensive. Certainly for the Dutch, bathing well was not limited to the wealthy. For a small fee ($2 or so) I was given a locker key, a towel, and access to tubs, saunas, steam rooms, and a juice bar. Without clothes, it is difficult to distinguish the poor from the rich anyway.

Over a few months, I developed several favorite sequences — steam to cold water, then sauna to a tepid bath, even an ice-cold immersion. What I remember most clearly, however, was discovering the trellised outdoor space. After a near-boiling whirlpool bath, I could sit outside in winter and be shrouded in the steam emanating from my own hot skin. It was sublime to lie on a chaise and watch others, their naked bodies wrapped in air and floating like angels in the clouds. At first, even faces were difficult to discern; our bodies only slowly returned to us as we cooled.

The Spiritual Moment

Although Christianity in the time of the Roman Empire may not have considered bathing to be part of a spiritual practice (except in baptisms, as previously mentioned), other religious traditions do. The Jewish mikva practice, for example, elevates the natural cleaning capacity of water to a symbol of preparation and purification — of the sacred bond between a married couple, or men before Yom Kippur, or the final stage in conversion to Judaism; the mikva bath is also a monthly routine for Jewish women to mark the end of their menstrual cycle and the rejoining of marital intimacy. It is understood to be a way to bring God into your life.

In the Japanese culture of Zen Buddhism, the fundamental notions of "letting go" and of living in the present are in many ways clearly exhibited in Japanese bathing rituals. A pure container of steaming water in the simplest of rooms — be it in the beauty of a mountain retreat built with local wood and stone or in an all-white tiled bathroom at home — inspires a feeling of tranquility and wholeness. Creating the physical space that encourages a pause — to take a breath and notice the loveliness of what surrounds us — provides the spatial layering of experience that typifies Japanese design.

At the personal level of daily bathing, the bath as a cleansing ritual with religious meaning also permeates Japanese society. Many families take baths after dinner, in a prescribed order: father, then mother, then children in order of age. Each person first washes using a nearby shower, so the shared water is not sullied with soap or dirt, and then climbs into the neck-deep tub full of extremely hot water and soaks. When everyone is finished, the used bath water is piped to the washing machine to clean the family's clothes. It is an effective (and sustainable) way to build relaxation and pleasure into a daily routine, as did the Greeks and Romans, while incorporating spiritual meaning as well.

A New Bath Culture?

There is something natural and essential about bathing that we skim over when we do it for purely practical reasons and in a way that lacks our full attention. When we combine that "skimming" with all the other facets of modern life — the skipped lunches, the rushing from here to there, the constant deadlines, and the lack of community inherent in our mobile society — we forget (until we go for vacation) that we are skimming over our *lives*. A good bath can help us to remember.

I miss the social spaces of the public bath and living within a culture that includes water as a vital element. To be comfortable bathing with others means to give up seeing them as different, as obstacles, as competitors. It serves to remind me of our shared humanity, under all the cloaks of class, race, age, and gender that we normally wear. It also reminds me to enjoy the present moment — in the bath, closing my eyes, breathing deeply — because after all, the present moment is all we really have. And perhaps more than anything, it makes me feel good, in a simple *and* profound way, about being here, on this planet — with all the other people who smile as they ease themselves into the tub. When America is ready for a public bath movement, I would love to design it. ■

Tamara M. Roy AIA is an urban designer and architect with the firm ADD Inc in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

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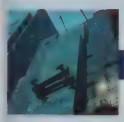


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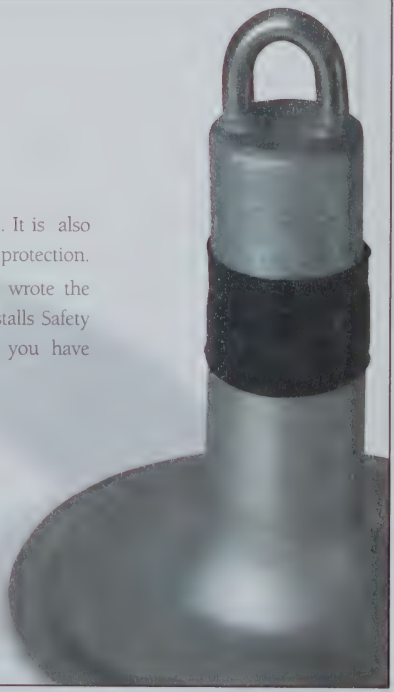
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A Matter of Taste: Pleasure Gardens and Civic Life

"To be natural is a very difficult pose to keep up."
—Oscar Wilde, *An Ideal Husband*

By Phyllis Andersen

"Popular taste is not a criterion that those who serve our public can respect." So said Mariana Van Rensselaer, the distinguished New York art critic and first biographer of H.H. Richardson. That remark, made in 1888, fueled the controversy that erupted over her criticism of flowerbeds in Boston's Public Garden. Describing them as crude hues in false situations, she took particular offense at "Crystal Palace Gem" geraniums: "The cherry-colored blossoms with yellow-green leaves are the most hideous products of recent horticulture." William Doogue, the Irish-born horticulturist in charge of the Garden's plantings, took exception to her criticism and also rebuked her social position, personal gardening habits, and Harvard-connected friends. Doogue defended his work as accommodating the general taste of the public, who loved his plantings. He protested to the local newspapers and the mayor and anyone who would hear him out.

Was all of this brouhaha caused by some ill-placed geraniums, or was it indicative of a deeper division in how we imagine our public parks? We all know the story of the 1858 competition for New York's Central Park won by Frederick Law Olmsted and architect Calvert Vaux with a plan titled "Greensward." Their proposal offered a picturesque landscape evocative of the English countryside, combining rustic structures with meadows punctuated by groves, rock outcroppings, and sinuous water bodies. "Sylvan" and "verdant" were words used by the designers to describe their design as "a constant suggestion to the imagination of an unlimited range of rural conditions." The contrast with the majority of proposals from competitors — engineers, landscape gardeners, and talented amateurs — represented a remarkable shift toward the narrative of the picturesque. Other, more traditional, plans presented highly embellished gardens with formal promenades, fountains, arches, statues of Greek deities and New York politicians, bandstands, and extensive formal layouts of flowering plants.

By the mid-19th century, the educated public understood that the picturesque



Beds of hardy and semi-tropical flowering plants set in formal geometric patterns, elements of the 19th-century "pleasure garden," can be seen today in the Boston Public Garden.





Left: Central Park with San Remo Apartments beyond. Right: Tivoli Gardens, Copenhagen.

landscape was the aesthetic ideal for public parks, allowing the mind to wander along with the body. Among others whose opinions counted, Thorstein Veblen pointed to an upper-class predilection for public parks that were rustic and natural. Enlightened park advocates rejected the "pleasure garden" model with its emphasis on flowery display, theatricality, sociability, and amusement — its artificiality and "claptrap and gewgaw," its lack of moral uplift and tasteful restraint.

Like sin and grace, the picturesque park and the pleasure garden are mutually defining. Olmsted used medical metaphors to promote his notion of the park ideal: parks should be an antidote to urban ills, healing places for damaged minds. Calvert Vaux's famous comment on Americans' intuitive love of the country was at the core of learned park discussions. Vaux spoke of an "innate homage to the natural in contradistinction to the artificial, a preference for the works of God to the works of man." Supporters of the pleasure-garden model

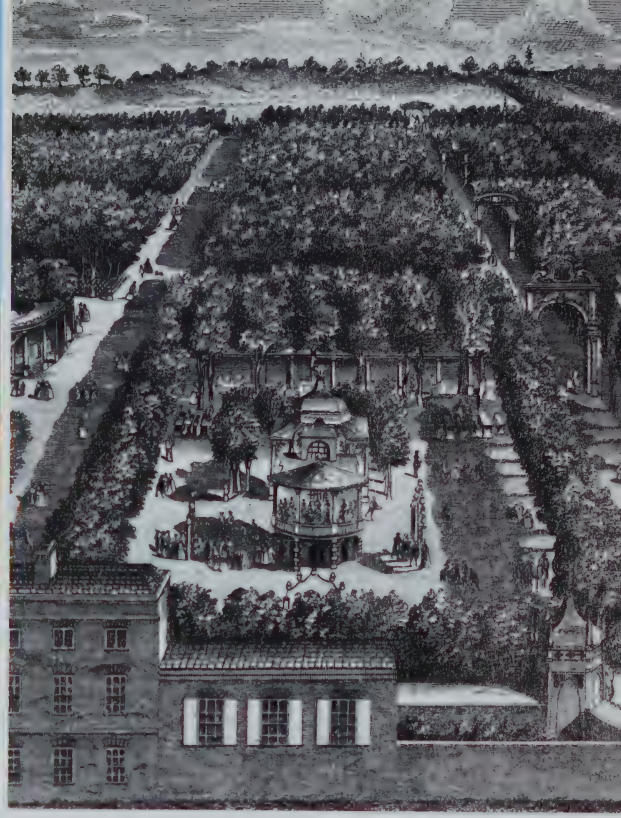
Like sin and grace, the picturesque park and pleasure garden are mutually defining.

rejected the imposition of rural scenery on the city and embraced the seductive lure of sensual sound, color, and light — a sustained Fourth of July celebration, an extended summer fête.

The public pleasure garden originated in London in the 18th century with extensive public gardens established at Ranelagh, Marylebone, and Islington. But Vauxhall Gardens on London's South Bank most completely and intensely captured the public's imagination. A favorite watering hole for Samuel Johnson, it was frequently used as a fictional backdrop by novelists. It offered grand promenades, open-air temples imitating ancient buildings, an array of dining and drinking pavilions, small theatres, bandstands, tea gardens, and private bowers for romantic interludes. Linking the attractions were elaborate flower displays of local and foreign blooms selected for color, fragrance, and mood-evoking exotic origins. There were fireworks and beguiling night-lighting in an era when both were rare. In its heyday, Vauxhall Gardens attracted aristocracy, royalty, and anyone who wished to mingle and immerse in an environment designed to please.

New York entrepreneurs transported the Vauxhall Gardens concept, name, and menu of attractions to New York in 1805, to the area around Broadway and East 8th Street, which is now known as Astor Place. At the same time, the less-than-sybaritic Hoboken, New Jersey, created Elysian





Left: Flower beds surround the statue of George Washington in the Boston Public Garden. Right: Vauxhall Gardens in London, 1754.

Fields, a popular waterfront park that offered ferry service from Manhattan (and where, some say, the first organized game of baseball took place). The last of the New York pleasure gardens, Palace Gardens, located at West 14th Street and Sixth Avenue, opened in 1858 (the same year as the Central Park competition). It offered the usual array of dining pavilions, water features, and elaborate night-lighting.

Today, the tradition of the pleasure garden continues to influence the way we think about urban parks. Certainly the questions posed 150 years ago continue to resonate: Who owns the parks? The planners? The middle class? The working class having no other options? And just as important: What is the purpose of a park?

The success of the pleasure gardens was due to diligent management by the entrepreneurs who owned them and developed new attractions: balloon launches; water gondolas; music commissioned for special occasions. The eventual demise of the public pleasure garden was due in part to competition from new urban amenities: restaurants; concert halls; theatres; tearooms; and cafés dispersed throughout the city. It was due as well to the growth of petty crime that, then as now, often attaches to public venues that draw huge crowds. And some pleasure gardens, having contributed to the growth and desirability of the city, became victims of their own success and were lost to real-estate development pressures. The prototypical evocation of a pleasure garden that was not lost is Copenhagen's Tivoli, which opened in 1843. Patterned on London's Vauxhall and named for the beautiful resort town near Rome, it still offers families a complete pleasure-garden experience with attractions interspersed among flower displays appropriate to the season.

Today, the tradition of the pleasure garden continues to influence the way we think about urban parks.

The horticultural display of pleasure gardens, with its emphasis on seasonal flowering, evolved into today's civic horticulture — embellishment of city-spaces that are not within the purview of the professional landscape architect and most often maintained by gardeners trained through apprenticeship and guided by trade magazines. These plantings typically feature massing of large numbers of flowers of strong color-contrasts arranged in geometric or pictorial patterns. Some traditions, such as the theatrical display of plants in graduated tiers, evolved from the 18th-century English estate garden into the public pleasure garden, as still seen

in Boston's Public Garden today. Civic horticulture draws on a rich planting tradition that evokes admiration of both the beauty of the plantings and the ingenuity of the gardener. The immense popularity of the Rose Garden in the Fens section of Boston's Emerald Necklace, of the planted borders in downtown Boston's Post Office Square, and the grand flowerbeds in Copley Square are fine examples of horticulture that enlivens the city, akin to Pop Concerts on the Esplanade.

Although theme parks and amusement parks are obvious descendants of the pleasure garden, recent trends in urban public parks suggest that the pleasure garden is enjoying a renaissance of sorts. We are in the midst of defining a new urban-park discourse, one that rejects the picturesque and encourages new kinds of urban engagement — drawing in the city, making use of technology, and embracing theatricality. Chicago's new Millennium Park, an assemblage of cultural attractions and elaborate planting displays, lists "theatre consultant and lighting designer" as part of the design team. The team of Kathryn Gustafson and Crosby, Schlessinger and Smallwood have developed a highly ornamental planting plan for the North End Park of Boston's Rose Kennedy Greenway. The Dutch horticulturist Piet Oudolf is acting as a consultant for a number of new urban parks in the United States, bringing his skill at highly textured perennial planting in changing seasonal patterns to a new audience. Yet, we still drag issues of public taste behind us, although now couched in concerns for environmental suitability, often with the same moral overtones that characterized the Central Park discussions of the mid-19th century.

We lay a huge responsibility on our urban parks. They must be didactic, educate about ecology, unify communities, and convey history.

We lay a huge responsibility on our urban parks. They must be didactic, educate about ecology, unify communities, and convey history. They must exhibit good taste and local values. But if we are to sustain parks in cities, they must embrace the imagination of the public. Disneyfication is now an indictment. But one suspects that William Doogue would have welcomed Walt Disney's words: "We are not trying to entertain critics. I'll take my chances with the public." ■

Phyllis Andersen is a landscape historian and the former director of the Institute for Cultural Landscape Studies of the Arnold Arboretum. She is a member of the editorial board of *ArchitectureBoston*.

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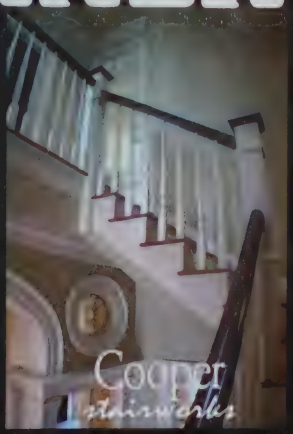
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BUILD LIT 101: A HOUSE OF ONE'S OWN

An entire literary genre has grown around the delights and disasters of house construction

By Mark Ruckman

Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House, 1948. Left to right: Myrna Loy, Cary Grant, and Reginald Denny.

Runners have told us about it for years. Hardcore bungee jumpers sleepwalk through their daily lives until their next one. But to date, there is no scientific evidence to suggest that demolishing a house causes an endorphin rush. Anecdotal evidence, however, from the crop of books on the market about building (or rebuilding) a house suggests that cutting off a wrought-iron railing with a Sawzall running at full tilt is a total high.

Houses have always occupied a place in American literature. There are the famous ones: the great, ruined house with seven gables that Nathaniel Hawthorne used to express his disenchantment with the Puritan ideals still lingering in 19th-century New England; Thoreau's little house in the woods where he went to "live deliberately." *The House of Mirth* (1905) by Edith Wharton and *The Yellow Wall-paper* (1892) by Charlotte Perkins Gilman are both works of fiction that center on house and home while incisively exposing the severely limited choices available to women in society at the time. It would be another century or so before a single woman living alone would wield a Sawzall and cut through a wall in her house to accommodate a relocated cottage and live to tell about it. (Lily Bart would be proud.)

Build-Lit

Cottage for Sale — Must Be Moved: A Woman Moves a House to Make a Home by Kate Whouley, Commonwealth Editions, 2004

Dark Harbor: Building House and Home on an Enchanted Island by Ved Mehta, Nation Books, 2003

"Fear and Loathing in Woods Hole: Building a Contemporary House on Cape Cod" by Catherine Cramer, *ArchitectureBoston*, May/June 2004.

Gutted: Down to the Studs in My House, My Marriage, My Entire Life by Lawrence LaRose, Bloomsbury USA, 2004

House by Tracy Kidder, Houghton Mifflin, 1985

"The House on Stanton Road" by Marcie Hershman, *ArchitectureBoston*, September/October 2002

The Most Beautiful House in the World by Witold Rybczynski, Viking Adult, 1989

Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House by Eric Hodgins, Simon & Schuster, 1946 (reissue, Academy Chicago, 1987)

Under the Tuscan Sun: At Home in Italy by Frances Mayes, Chronicle Books, 1996

Houses as Characters

The Big House: A Century in the Life of an American Summer Home by George Howe Colt, Scribner, 2003

The House of Mirth by Edith Wharton, 1905

The House of Seven Gables by Nathaniel Hawthorne, 1851

Meanwhile, Next Door to the Good Life by Jean Hay Bright, Brightberry Press, 2003

Red House: Being a Mostly Accurate Account of New England's Oldest Continuously Lived-in House by Sarah Messer, Viking Adult, 2004

Walden; or, Life in the Woods by Henry David Thoreau, 1854

The Yellow Wallpaper by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, 1892

More recently, George Howe Colt's *The Big House* and Sarah Messer's *Red House* offered readers glimpses into the privileges and burdens of the family home by painting portraits of houses as containers of multi-generational family history.

Like architecture, American literary tastes evolve in response to dominant social and cultural interests and concerns. Some current critics speak of an American imagination so ground down by television that we are no longer able to imagine fictional worlds. This has led to the publishing industry's recent fascination with memoirs on one hand and to the proliferation of television reality shows on the other. Combined with our concurrent fascination with extreme makeovers and the racks of shelter magazines that greet us at the checkout line, the rise of the "build lit" genre seems to be a peculiarly American phenomenon. Is there another population anywhere in the world that takes such delight in — or is so endlessly entertained by — the prospect of building a house?

The novel *Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House* was first published in 1946. (That same year, Carl Buchan bought out his brother-in-law and partner, James Lowe, to create a national chain of hardware stores named after Mr. Lowe.) A *New Yorker* reviewer wrote that "Mr. Blandings' skinning by real-estate men, architects, contractors, and plumbers should provide the reader with a lot of sadistic satisfaction, if it isn't too uncomfortably reminiscent." The novel apparently struck a cord with postwar American readers and was even twice adapted into film: once in 1948, starring Cary Grant and Myrna Loy, and again in 1986 as *The Money Pit* with Tom Hanks and Shelley Long.

The "money pit" theme is front and center in Lawrence LaRose's *Gutted*, published in 2004. LaRose tells the story of the total renovation of his Cape Cod-style house in Sag Harbor, New York. The subtitle, "Down to the Studs in My House, My Marriage, My Entire Life," reflects LaRose's struggle to place his difficult and at times disastrous home renovation within the context of his overall life. LaRose, a writer whose previous book includes the bestseller, *The Code: Time-Tested Secrets for Getting What You Want from Women — Without Marrying Them!*, and his wife, Susan, a PR consultant for nonprofits, are determined to build their dream house in the cheapest way possible. We learn in the beginning of the book about their refusal to hire an "architectural idea factory inclined to invoice at lawyerlike rates" as they attempt an "end run on the design discussion" in order to get to work as soon as possible. This decision leads them to hire an architecture student to draft some plans at an hourly rate of $25. They pride themselves on finding a cheap solution and helping someone "make his mark in the land of opportunity." The remainder of the book, while at times funny, is mostly a harangue about the problems that this and other penny-pinching solutions cause them. LaRose appeals to the sympathy of money-pit-wary homeowners without taking into account the real, underlying causes of problems in the home-building industry for those who take design seriously.

A gentler, while still penny-pinching, story is Kate Whouley's *Cottage for Sale, Must Be Moved* (2004). A compulsive reader of *Pennysaver* classifieds, Whouley finds a small vacation cottage for sale for $3,000. Desiring more space so she can move her office out of her bedroom, Whouley arranges to have the cottage moved 20 miles and attaches it to her small house on Cape Cod. A book-industry consultant accustomed to doing things on her own, she appoints herself project designer and assembles a local crew of friends and professionals to serve as builders, cheerleaders, and drinking buddies. Whouley plays the character of a frugal New Englander to the hilt and shares her excitement at uncovering building materials in the bargain bin at the Mid-Cape Home Center. The pleasure she takes in this project comes from sticking to her budget, learning new skills, and sharing the experience with a team of people whom she trusts and respects. Americans are used to tackling things on their own, but for some jobs there is no substitute for professional help. Lifting a house from one foundation and placing it on another is one of those jobs.

Witold Rybczynski's *The Most Beautiful House in the World* (1989) is another example of the build-lit genre. The author, a noted architect and writer, serves as architect, client, and builder on an intended boat shed that turns into a house. Rybczynski's

Cary Grant, Myrna Loy, and Melvyn Douglas.

House: 20 Years Later

Twenty years after building a house, many couples find that their lives have moved on — to other houses, other towns, even other spouses. Judith and Jonathan Souweine, whose house project was the center of Tracy Kidder's 1985 bestseller, *House*, are still married and still living in the house that so many Americans know so well. More astonishingly, they are still friendly with their architect and their contractor.

Judith Souweine confesses that she hasn't thought much about the book in the last two decades. "We love this house, but the details that are in the book are not the important details of our lives at that time," she explains. "The book barely mentions our children — it's basically a snapshot of our lives as consumers. When you build a house, you are buying all the time."

The relationships that were the focus of *House* continued after publication. Tracy Kidder asked the Souweines' architect, Bill Rawn, to design a house on the coast of Maine and hired their contractor, Apple Corps, to build it. Despite the opportunity to build up a residential practice based on his new-found fame, Rawn deliberately chose another direction. "Architecture is a public art," he notes today, "and I really wanted to figure out how to build in a way to benefit a wider population than single-family homeowners."

The Souweines, like many homeowners, have made a few changes to the house, first hiring Rawn to design a garage, and later hiring a landscape architect to design a screened porch with connecting decks and walkways. "Of course, we know that any changes we make to the house must be approved by Bill," Judith Souweine admits. She reflects on how the house has also accommodated the unplanned changes that life inevitably brings to every family: "My husband recovered recently from leukemia and this was a wonderful place to recuperate."



As they have for 20 years, the Souweine family (now including three grown children, a son-in-law, and a two-year-old grandson) have invited their architect to join them for Thanksgiving this year, at the house they made together in Amherst, Massachusetts.

book is an exploration of the creative process and a meditation on the nature of architecture and the role of the architect. Rybczynski extends his personal experience with designing, building, and living in a house and makes it universal. "Inhabiting does not only mean living within. It means occupying—infusing a particular site with our presence, and not only with our activities and physical possessions, but also with our aspirations and dreams." Architects are highly trained, creative professionals with an understanding of design and construction details. But as Rybczynski points out, it takes a client (in this case, his wife, Shirley) more cognizant of the "minutiae of everyday life that constitute a home" to build a house successfully.

Tracy Kidder must be given credit for creating the nonfiction build-lit genre following the interest in *Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House* in 1946. He did it first and he did it best with the publication of *House* in 1985. Kidder's story of an upper-middle-class Amherst couple who hire an architect (Bill Rawn, then an unknown) to design a house for them and their children is well-known by both the public and the profession (many young architects report that *House* was required reading in their introductory architecture courses). Thoroughly researched, with more than a few pages devoted to construction history, Kidder's story weaves the drama that unfolds between the architect, clients, and builder together with details such as the history of the modern nail. This uniquely American tale also traces this country's movement away from Thomas Jefferson's dream of "a nation of virtuous farmers living in simple but dignified houses of their own" to the reality that residential architecture in America expresses social differences. This is certainly true of the house that Rawn designed for the Souweines (they often fret that the house is too big), although Rawn did appeal to his clients' shared social conscience in arguing for a Greek Revival house—"something American and populist, and something so simple. A box with some ornament." By recreating the process of building a house, Kidder captures some of the beliefs, desires, anxiety, and joy that Americans feel about the buildings in which they live.

Frances Mayes describes the house as a metaphor for the self in *Under the Tuscan Sun*, but our connections to house and home extend beyond ourselves. Most people have a strong association with one house or another in their lifetime. Some dream of escaping a family home to build a life in a faraway city. Some are lifelong renters. Some do not have access to basic shelter. Still, for many, Thoreau's declaration in *Walden* that "at a certain season of our life we are accustomed to consider every spot as the possible site of a house" still resonates. Although there are fewer and fewer sites on which to build a house and more people for whom the goal of owning a home of their own remains elusive, the American dream of the single-family home endures. ■

Mark Ruckman is an associate editor for *ArchitectureBoston* and director of communications for the BSA.

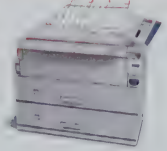
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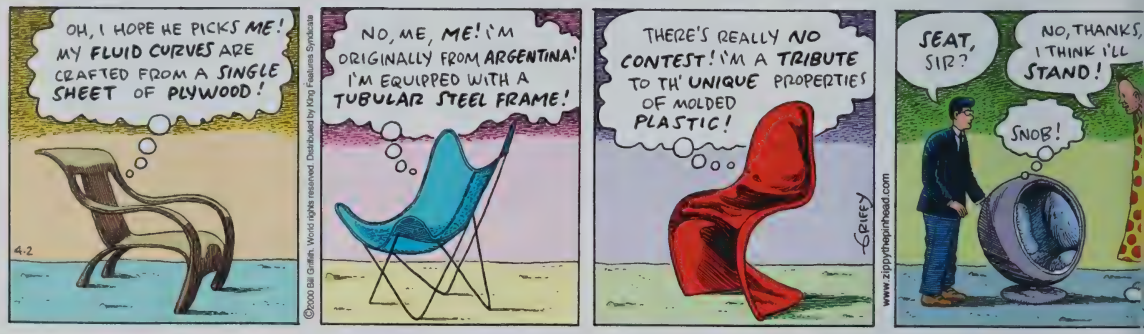




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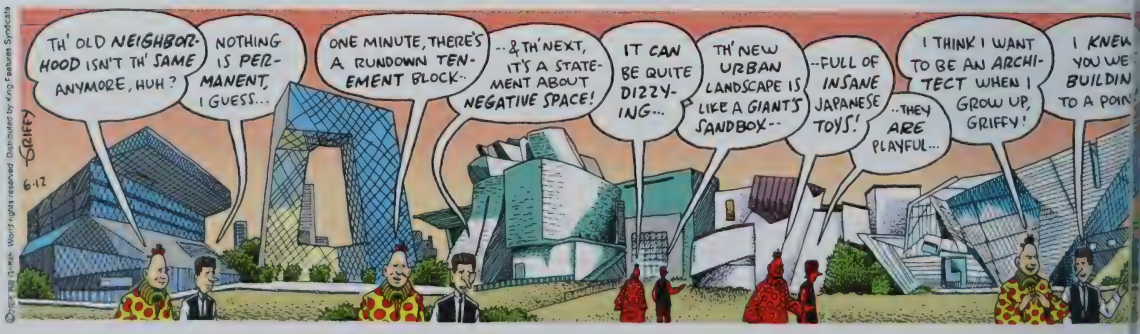
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SOMETHING ABOUT ZIPPY

HOW A GUY IN A MUUMUU BECAME ONE OF THE MOST WIDELY READ COMMENTATORS ON THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

BILL GRIFFITH TALKS WITH JEFF STEIN AIA



BILL GRIFFITH is the creator of *Zippy the Pinhead*, a daily cartoon strip that made its debut in 1970 and today is published in over 200 newspapers worldwide through the King Features Syndicate. Books of his collected work include, most recently, *Zippy: From Here to Absurdity* (2004). Griffith is also the originator of the phrase, "Are we having fun yet?" — first uttered by Zippy in 1979.

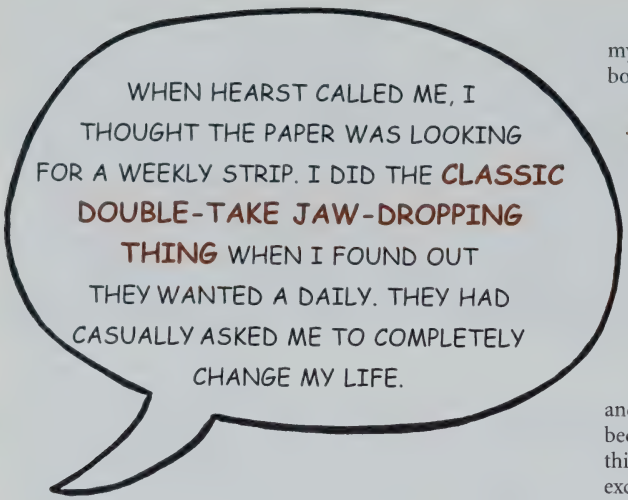
JEFF STEIN AIA is the architecture critic for *Banker & Tradesman* and the director of the architecture program at the Boston Architectural Center.

Jeff Stein: *Zippy the Pinhead* delivers pleasure in a really subtle way. Unlike a lot of other "funny ha-ha" comic strips, where the punch line is always in the last panel, *Zippy* is extremely complex. You mine the form by making us pay attention to art, line, character, words. Even within four short panels, there is generally a narrative, a little bit of story. And in the end, the pleasure comes from the complexity of the thing. Is that what you have in mind?

Bill Griffith: I've never quite put it in those words, but yes. When I'm doing a strip, I'm aware that I'm weaving elements together, almost improvising, as if I were all the instruments in a little jazz combo, then stepping back constantly to edit and fine-tune. This jazz analogy came to me years ago, in the sense of playing my various instruments, one of which is language. Playing with language is what Zippy gets the most delight from, even more than the content of what he is involved with or thinking about or confronted with.

Jeff Stein: It's not just the meaning of the language, it's the sound of it, too.

Bill Griffith: It's the way the stimulus presents itself as a way for him to enjoy his verbal reaction to it. What some people think of as non-sequiturs, I think of as carefully crafted juxtapositions.



Jeff Stein: The phrase " non-sequitur" comes up a lot in references to your work.

Bill Griffith: Yes, always. That and surrealism, neither of which are accurate, though I do accept the surrealism characterization.

Jeff Stein: And yet Zippy seems to be a perfect character for these times.

Bill Griffith: I may be the only mainstream daily newspaper cartoonist with a character like Zippy, but my origins are in underground comics back in the late '60s up through the late '70s. If you look at the work of the people who survived that time and are still working, you won't find another Zippy, but you'll find characters, especially in the work of Robert Crumb, who are off the rails in a similar way. Why those artists never aspired to daily newspaper comic strip-hood, I don't know. Why I'm the only one who made the leap is literally a matter of serendipity. It was never a conscious effort; I got a phone call from Will Hearst III in 1985, when he took over *The San Francisco Examiner*, and from then on, my path changed from working for magazines and comic books to working for daily newspapers.

Jeff Stein: Hearst apparently also called Hunter Thompson and hired him at the same time.

Bill Griffith: Yes, and Crumb. I said yes sort of tentatively. Thompson said yes happily, then never met his deadlines. Crumb said no, but his wife convinced him to give it a try. He produced 20 strips, which were clearly meant to sabotage the whole thing, because they could never be printed in that newspaper. There was no overt sex, but there was enough to break all the taboos that needed to be broken. Thompson delivered the first few columns on deadline, and that was it. His column was supposed to be weekly; it became monthly; then it became whenever he felt like it. I think Will Hearst's idea was to make *The Examiner* more exciting. Thompson lasted about a year until he was flown to San Francisco by Hearst to talk about not meeting his deadlines and to see what could be worked out. Of course, he arrived loaded — in two ways, with alcohol and with firearms. When Hearst approached the door of the hotel room, the story — which I heard directly from Thompson — is that he fired through the door at Hearst. That was the dramatic end of their relationship.

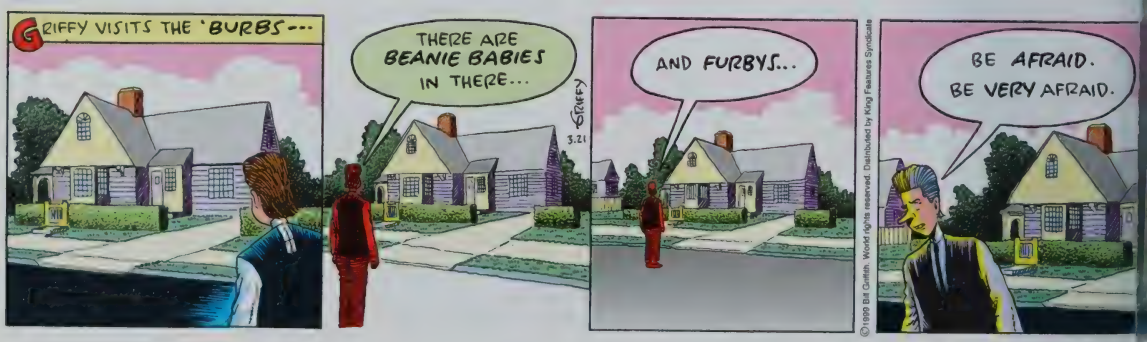
Jeff Stein: Creating a daily strip takes enormous discipline. Some cartoonists have assistants.

Bill Griffith: I have no assistants. When Hearst called me, I thought the paper was looking for a weekly strip, because that's what I had been doing. I did the classic double-take jaw-dropping thing when I found out they wanted a daily. They had just casually asked me to completely change my life.

Jeff Stein: How did it change your life?

Bill Griffith: The first year was very difficult. I don't have a problem with working. I'm really happiest when I'm working. But I did have a problem with being creative on demand, literally every day I do seven strips a week. I take Sunday off, so I have to do two in

ZIPPY



one day. They're generally done five to six weeks in advance — nine weeks for the Sunday strips. If I know I'm going to take a vacation or give a lecture, I have to work extra hard.

Jeff Stein: Where do you get the discipline?

Bill Griffith: I just listen to that little voice inside my head. In my case, it's my father's voice. I can hear him telling me to get down to the studio and go to work. Not that he wanted me to be a cartoonist. He'd rather I got into my car and drove to some engineering plant. But he drilled a work ethic into me, which, in some ways, I rebelled against for many years, but I'm now grateful for.

Jeff Stein: You spent some of your childhood in Levittown?

Bill Griffith: I grew up in Levittown. A friend of mine still has family there, and I've been back as recently as last year. It's very strange. It's prospering.

Jeff Stein: People are getting little additions to their houses —

Bill Griffith: Major additions, actually. There are only a dozen that have not been significantly altered. When we moved there in '52, it was barren. Since there were no trees or shrubbery, you felt as though all the other houses were right on top of you. And they almost were, because they were only separated by 20 feet or so. But seeing one house 20 feet away is different from seeing all of the houses, each 20 feet apart, in perspective going in every direction. I got lost constantly, as did all my friends. If it wasn't for the names of the streets, you wouldn't know where you were. It was a very surreal environment.

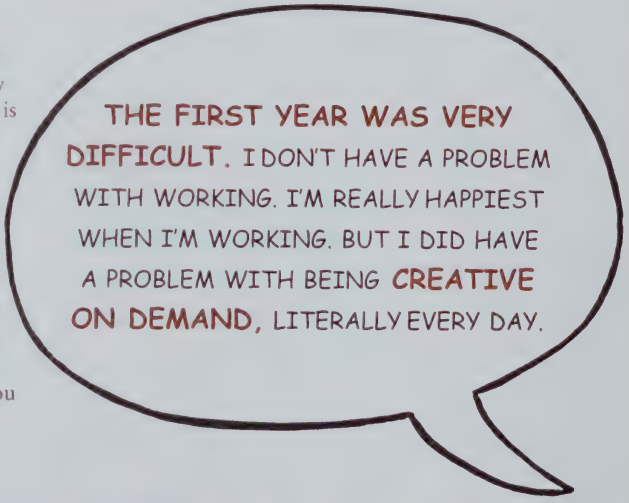
Jeff Stein: Among the things that are fascinating about the *Zippy* comic is the background — the sense of a real place in the strip. It's not a doghouse in an imaginary back yard; Zippy goes to real places. And we can go, too — your website lists the places referenced in each strip. How did you come to imagine that would be a way to ground ideas?

Bill Griffith: After a couple of years of *Zippy* in the early '70s, a good cartoonist friend of mine said he still liked the strip, but it was beginning to feel a bit like being trapped in an elevator with a crazy person who wouldn't stop talking. He wasn't going to tell me what to do about it, but just let that thought sink in. He was right. After a while, I thought Zippy is like Costello without Abbott; he needs someone or some reality to bounce off. Something that's grounded, that's solid and real. So I started adding the real world into the strip.

Jeff Stein: You're well known for going places and taking photos and then going back and using them.

Bill Griffith: I keep more than one camera handy all the time. I also depend on the kindness of people who send me photographs. After I started including real places, I began to get photographs from people who said, "Maybe this is someplace Zippy would like to visit." So now I get several envelopes a day, full of photographs, many of which have a wonderful, personal, snapshot quality. I use them for reference.

Jeff Stein: One of the kinds of places that appears quite a bit is the diner.



PPY



AFTER I STARTED INCLUDING REAL PLACES, I BEGAN TO GET PHOTOGRAPHS FROM PEOPLE WHO SAID, "MAYBE THIS IS SOMEPLACE ZIPPY WOULD LIKE TO VISIT."

Bill Griffith: That started when I first moved from San Francisco to Connecticut in 1998. I had used diner interiors a few times in strips. I always liked the opportunity that a counter and stools gave for a little storytelling. When I moved to New England, I was drawn in by diners again. I started going to them, from state to state, just to soak them up and sample the rice pudding. Then they started appearing in my strips. I even invented two new characters, Bert 'n' Bob, who are literally stuck on their stools — you never see them from anywhere but behind. And I started eavesdropping, writing down snatches of overheard conversation, which diners offer in spades. They're a great place to soak up not only a kind of quintessentially American architecture, but also quintessentially American archetypal people. Very different from fast-food places — they're too noisy, and the spaces are too big. And for the most part, the people in fast-food places aren't talking much. People in diners are much more interesting. And diners are just fun to draw. I think half of why I put in all the detail is that I enjoy doing it.

Jeff Stein: That level of detail is another fascinating thing about your work. If there are books on a shelf in the background, there are often real titles on the books.

Bill Griffith: I try to pack as many cultural references into one strip as is humanly possible, which is why, if you notice in the back of all the *Zippy* book collections, there is something called the Pindex. And all the strips are footnoted, so you can find out where that diner was, or where that muffler man was, or who Annette Funicello was.

Jeff Stein: In addition to "non-sequitur," the term "absurd" comes up from time to time in reference to the strips. I think that's a more powerful and positive way of characterizing what goes on in *Zippy*. The "theatre of the absurd" movement that followed World War I did exactly what *Zippy* does now — it pointed out inconsistencies in what goes on in our everyday world.

Bill Griffith: Yes. Zippy is consistently inconsistent. To me, absurdity — the absurd reaction, or the recognition that something is absurd — is the essence of mental health.

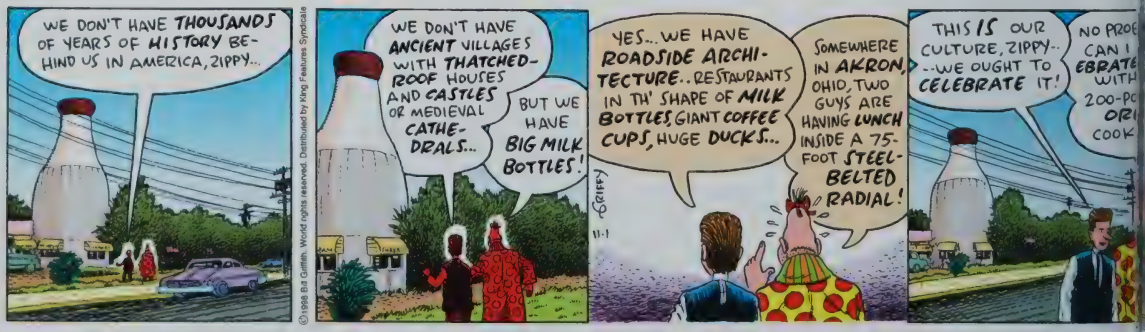
Jeff Stein: Zippy is often characterized as being a wise fool, which is a really good description.

Bill Griffith: The model of the court jester is also there. He is licensed by his outsider status to run off at the mouth, to make fun of everything in his own slightly skewed, surreal way. He's also deemed harmless, which is a mistake on the part of a person who deems him so.

Jeff Stein: Who or what was the inspiration for Zippy?

Bill Griffith: There are two. One was a sideshow performer in the Barnum and Bailey Circus, who was known as Zip-the-What-Is-It? Strangely, his actual name was almost the same as mine. My birth certificate reads William Henry Jackson Griffith, after my great-grandfather, William H. Jackson, who was an early photographer of the American West [editor's note: The first photographer of Yellowstone, Jackson was later recognized as the foremost landscape photographer of his time]. William Henry Jackson was the birth name of Zip-the-What-Is-It? Also, Zip was born in 1843, the year after my great-grandfather. It gets kind of cosmic. The other

ZIPPY



inspiration for Zippy, and the source of his muumuu, was Schlitzie the Pinhead, whose real name was Simon Metz. He was featured in the 1932 Todd Browning film *Freaks*, which I saw in college. Pinheads — microcephalics — tend to speak in a characteristic speech pattern — complete sentences that seem disconnected or random, but that actually flow together in a strange way. That gave me Zippy's voice, although it's since evolved. It was not a vehicle for political satire in the early days; now it can be.

Jeff Stein: You typically have a couple of characters in a strip — one of them is often your alter-ego, Griffy.

Bill Griffith: Griffy can be bitter and angry sometimes. He can express my reaction to a situation or a phenomenon, whether it's cultural or political.

Jeff Stein: But there's always the enveloping lightness of Zippy to counteract that.

Bill Griffith: Right. And Griffy knows that Zippy's reaction is healthier than his, so he's sometimes envious of Zippy. But most of the time he's off on a rant.

Jeff Stein: Does he learn?

Bill Griffith: No.

Jeff Stein: As you work, do you make an outline as a kind of structure upon which your intuition can be hung?

Bill Griffith: Sometimes I have the entire strip in my head, start to finish; it comes to me instantly. That's pretty rare. But what usually does happen is that the first panel comes to me out of nowhere.

Jeff Stein: And you've become comfortable with the notion that it will in fact show up.

Bill Griffith: Right. Then I have to listen to what wants to happen next. It's probably similar to composing music.

Jeff Stein: Zippy seems to have a huge online presence [www.zippythepinhead.com] — he's turned into a real industry.

Bill Griffith: Websites sometimes give an exaggerated impression. *Zippy* online is literally a cottage industry — it's me and a couple of people who help me, taking and filling orders and sending stuff out. But the website has been a great thing for me, both in connecting me to my readers and in generating income without which I might not be able to continue doing the strip, because newspaper income has remained exactly the same for every cartoonist for the past 40 or 50 years. No prices have ever gone up. If *The Boston Globe* paid $100 a week for *Zippy* in 1985, it's paying $100 today.

Jeff Stein: Do you have a social agenda with *Zippy*? From your position, you can comment on world events in a way that news organizations can't.

Bill Griffith: Right. I have no requirement to be fair and balanced. On those few occasions when I feel compelled to comment about something political or social that I know is not going to be in people's full awareness when the strip runs five or six weeks later, I have to think: do I want to try to get the papers to bump the previous strips and replace them with this? I consciously steer away from doing that a lot, for two reasons: one, it's not what I want to do; and two, those kinds of strips really don't have a very long shelf life. So I try to address the issue in such a way that it will still work five or six weeks later. When you read a compilation of strips that are politically very tuned in to the *zeitgeist*, they're just documents. They're no longer vital, no longer entertaining.

Jeff Stein: And there's a real vitality to *Zippy*. It's in the mold of Walt Kelly and his *Pogo* strips.

Bill Griffith: Kelly was a huge favorite of mine.

Jeff Stein: *Pogo* had political commentary that was nonspecific, or timely but universal.

PPY





Bill Griffith: I make a conscious effort to do that — to use a less direct approach, make the same point, and as a result let the strip have a longer life and more universal relevance.

Jeff Stein: That's the way architecture works, too, as a storytelling art. The architect can't tell his or her story too specifically in the building, because if you're walking past it and look up but don't get it, then you don't get it. The building has to communicate in such a way that you can put your own overlay of meaning on it and still come away with an experience that is satisfying. And the same thing happens with *Zippy* — it requires an active observer. The reader can't be passive and expect to understand it. You as the cartoonist are only meeting your audience halfway.

Bill Griffith: I try to make that point with people who don't understand what I'm doing but would like to. If your expectation of the comic strip is to be entertained by the traditional model of three panels followed by a punch line in the fourth, you'll be disappointed, because I'm not necessarily going to do that. I may, but I may not. Sometimes I structure a strip in such a way — and this is intuitive on my part — that there's a surface gag as well as several other under-the-surface meanings at work.

Jeff Stein: There's a postmodern thing that you do occasionally, too, which is to quote from other cartoons, including cartoons from the past. The cover drawing of Zippy on the recent book, *From Here to Absurdity*, makes him look a little bit like Sluggo.

Bill Griffith: I love comics. I especially love comic books, although I think the best comic creation of all time is Nancy and Sluggo. I enjoy letting Zippy walk into another comic reality. It seems perfectly reasonable — if he's going to go to Las Vegas one day and talk to a muffler man somewhere in Wisconsin the next day, why can't he walk into Nancy and Sluggo's world? Why can't he suddenly be drawn as if he were in Little Nemo? Or why can't Zippy and his occasional wife Zerbina be transformed into romance comic figures for a day or two? It's fun. And I only play with those genres of comics that I love to look at and love to read. It gives me a lot of pleasure to dip into the style of some other cartoonist.

Jeff Stein: Your work often reminds me of Gertrude Stein's description of Oakland, California, in which she said, "There's no there, there." In *Zippy*, there is always a there, there.

Bill Griffith: When I first started doing the strips where Zippy appears in real places, a reader wrote that he was delighted to see that Zippy had escaped into the real world, which I thought was a great phrase. That's just what it felt like — he had run screaming from surrealism into the real world because the real world is even more fun. ■

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Covering the Issues

Pick me... Do you need to market yourself? (Of course, the dark secret to survival is that we all do....) ***How*** offers its "Self-Promotion Design Annual" (October 2005), promising "real world marketing strategies for students, newbies, and veterans." Does it deliver on strategies? Maybe not. But this issue certainly provides 140 examples of award-winning brochures, letterheads, logos, postcards, and one extraordinary wedding invitation. Consider it a flipbook of clever and beautiful graphic-design examples, including marketing materials that a practicing designer of any sort might actually use.

Back to school... ***CMYK*** (Summer 2005) offers a glimpse of another approach to design education: graphic design education. In "Choosing the Right Design School," Keith O'Brien interviews educators, administrators, and students. Their advice? Who's in charge, who's teaching, who the alumni are (and the sort of work all these folks are doing) matter. Expensive private design schools are worth it, generally, for the depth of their infrastructure, faculty, students, and alumni network. The usefulness of a master's degree depends on the situation. Sound familiar? O'Brien cites Ric Grefe, executive director of the American Institute of Graphic Arts, who notes that design education "is not about the tools, but about acquiring the judgment to use those tools effectively." Wise words for architects, too.

The new, new thing... ***Business Week*** presents nifty new things in its "Best Product Design of 2005" special issue (July 4, 2005). Some — like Rubbermaid's "Paint Buddy" or the no-tank "Hatbox" toilet — are of the practical why-didn't-we-think-of-this-before variety. Others, like the "tryke to bike," just look cool. *Business Week* editors note that in the '90s, innovation meant technology; today, innovation means design. Whatever that means. They argue that "design" helps companies focus on the future and provides that important "wow!" factor, while also solving (or at least simplifying) complex problems. However, a look at these award-winners, selected from 1,380 entries from around the globe, suggest that the "wow!" factor might not be enough. While these lovely things might meet a specific function, the question remains — to what end?

Off the beaten path... In its "Interacting with the Things that Surround You" issue (September/October 2005), ***Print*** presents a fascinating range of unusual image-based material that offers all sorts of inspiration. Steven Heller spends a week in the New York Public Library's new digital gallery that now makes 500,000 images freely available on the Internet. It's a tremendous resource for those who rely on image-based presentations. Steven Brower presents the drawings and sketchbooks of Woody Guthrie, revealing a well-developed hand and cultural and political subjects as diverse as his music. Mark Dery discusses the influence of our fastest growing ethnic group — Hispanics — on fashion, music, and design, including a brief guide to leading designers and their work.

And the Digital Design Annual Awards includes sneak peeks into winning website pages: MoMA's "Tall Buildings" exhibition; Stephen Yablon's architectural practice; European "shadow and light" architectural photography; and, yes, the Subservient Chicken. A must-see for anyone considering a website upgrade.

A Salute...

Hats off to the folks at ***ArchVoices***, who have become friends over the years. Their weekly electronic newsletter ended this fall after 265 issues. Over the years, *ArchVoices* has become both watchdog and conscience,



critic and inspiring voice, frustration-ventilation and organizing vehicle. The people behind *Arch Voices* reminded the architectural community that we have a responsibility to a larger world, as they unearthed that idealism that got us into this pursuit in the first place. While highly critical of the profession today, they worked tirelessly to make it better. They argued that a positive role in architecture does not start and stop with licensure, just as having a voice in the profession is not only for those with gray hair. They provided a long-needed catalyst for action, convincing young people to get involved — and getting the grown-ups to notice. John and Cassius and all those who worked with you: Thank you. The voices we know will be missed; we look forward to their next generations. ■

Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA, teaches the architecture studios at Smith College and works with Rogers Marvel Architects.

Stretch your imagination.

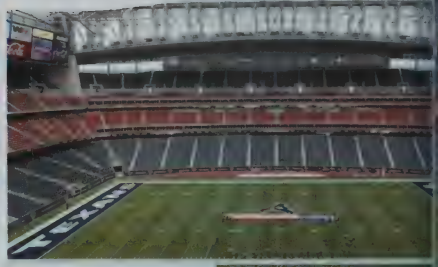
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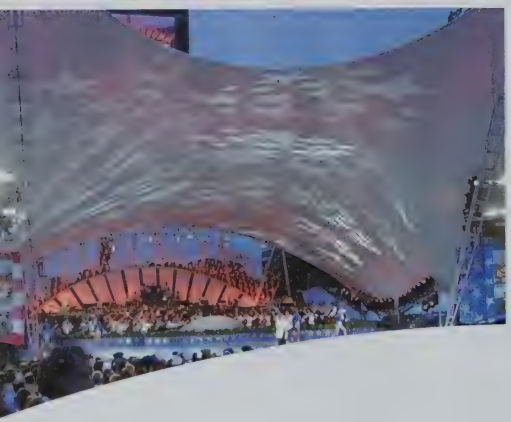


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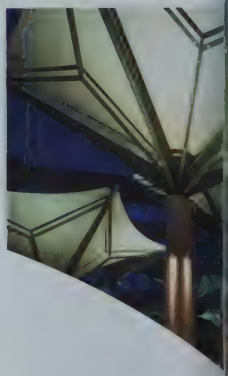












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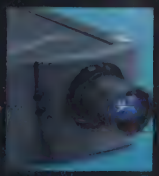
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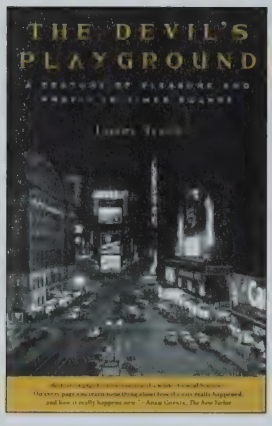
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THE DEVIL'S PLAYGROUND: A CENTURY OF PLEASURE AND PROFIT IN TIMES SQUARE
by James Traub
Random House, 2004
Reviewed by Kimberly Jones

What do historic places owe to any of us, and us to them? In *The Devil's Playground: A Century of Pleasure and Profit in Times Square*, New York journalist James Traub strains to broker a peace between the plasticized redevelopment of this storied local crossroads and the legions of dismayed onlookers he represents.

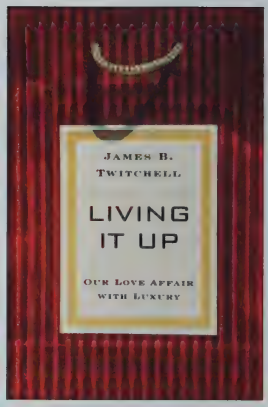
Traub begins by presenting detailed research into early 20th-century history, when New York's channelized social classes found a rare confluence in this burgeoning entertainment district. Through booms and bankruptcies, Times Square stuck to a diet of "frothy escapism" and homegrown "raffishness"; it mesmerized the nation with its dramas, both onstage and off. By mid-century, however, the merely titillating had given way to the outright criminal, and Hollywood had drawn the public gaze to the opposite coast.

Organized intervention seemed unavoidable, and Traub recounts the debates among architects and others regarding how — and whether — to redevelop Times Square; he later loitered there for the better part of two years to examine the recently completed project firsthand. Here the book comes alive, as Traub renders the square's new proprietors with the tools of a good fiction writer, warming to his most endearing subjects, despite their complicity in the "engineered" and "globalized" trends he finds unsettling.

Traub notes that corporate signage — however gaudy and outsized — loaded upon carefully refurbished theaters is only a thin continuance of the exuberant, *ad hoc* underpinnings of this place. But the old Times Square met demands that no longer exist. It was a gathering place, and as a society today, we're not much for gathering. The generation that shook off its Victorian constraints by hoofing the night away in Times Square cabarets was a stark contrast to today's youth, who find no shortage of evening venues in which to shake any number of things. And if American tastes in entertainment seem to have slipped a degree or two in their refinement, then perhaps what entertains the masses in today's Time Square is simply less agreeable to the modern highbrow than the popular fare from 1930. Places, like people, sometimes resist being tied so firmly to their inception; Times Square may just be testing new directions in which to take us. Unpredictability, after all, is one of its hallmarks.

A century ago, a corpulent businessman dispatched a young chef from his favorite Times Square eatery to Paris to commandeer a secret recipe and, when the lad returned, serenaded him at the dock with a small orchestra. I know of no urban strategy that could guarantee Times Square's return to that mythic charm. It seems that Traub doesn't either, but can't let go of the fantasy.

Kimberly Jones is a planner and writer in Boston.



LIVING IT UP: OUR LOVE AFFAIR WITH LUXURY
by James B. Twitchell
Columbia University Press, 2002
Reviewed by James McCown

"The world is too much with us," wrote Wordsworth. "Late and soon, getting and spending, we lay waste our powers." The English poet was only one in a long line of Western thinkers who have lamented the urge to splurge.

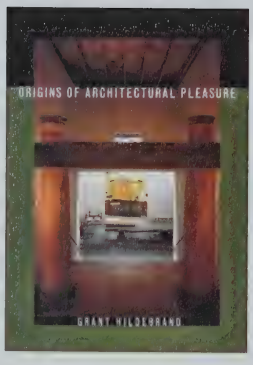
In *Living It Up*, James Twitchell, a professor of English at the University of Florida, has offered up something of an apologia for our consumerist age, detailing the history of hyper-luxurious and splendidly useless items from Hermès ties to Prada leather bags and Bang & Olufsen CD players. The book is at its best when he puts forth compelling arguments about the wide social benefits effected by "luxury pioneers," those upper-income people who are willing to pay dearly for new gadgets that then fall in price and become available to the masses (remember $1,000 VCRs). It's also lively when he gleefully pokes fun at his fellow tweedy, self-satisfied intellectuals and their dismissal of American consumerism as shallow and without purpose, even as they themselves lust for

luxury of a putatively less vulgar kind: "Liberals...complain of 'faceless suburbs,' sport utility vehicles, and big-screen TVs. Yet they're strangely untroubled by apartments on the Upper West Side, country houses in Vermont, and Volvo station wagons. The message, apparently, is Le Corbusier is good, La-Z-Boy bad."

But the book has organizational problems. The first half is so overloaded with brand names and advertising clippings that the reader feels like a hapless shopper accidentally locked in Bloomingdale's for the night, doomed to roam the aisles bleary-eyed until help arrives. As a paid consultant to the advertising industry, Twitchell adopts, without irony, too many shop terms, dropping "consumption constellation" and "brandscape" and dozens of others without really defining them or questioning their meaning. And throughout the book, one senses that he is leading up to some great, final defense wherein he will put forth the transcendent global meaning and larger human purpose of "the finer things in life." But it never comes. He ends with not one but two rambling chapters on Las Vegas, repeating all of the Robert Venturi musings that architects have been reading and discussing for 35 years, but never really reaching any compelling or memorable conclusion on his core subject.

This book could have been an antidote to *Affluenza*, the 2002 tome by John De Graaf *et al* that accompanied the earlier PBS series of the same title. That book, which annoyingly and persistently suggested that American object lust was at the root of everything from African hunger to terrorism, was nevertheless a stimulating read. By contrast, Twitchell's offers an admirable thesis about the larger good produced by getting and spending. But when it comes to delivering the goods, *Living It Up* is a disappointment.

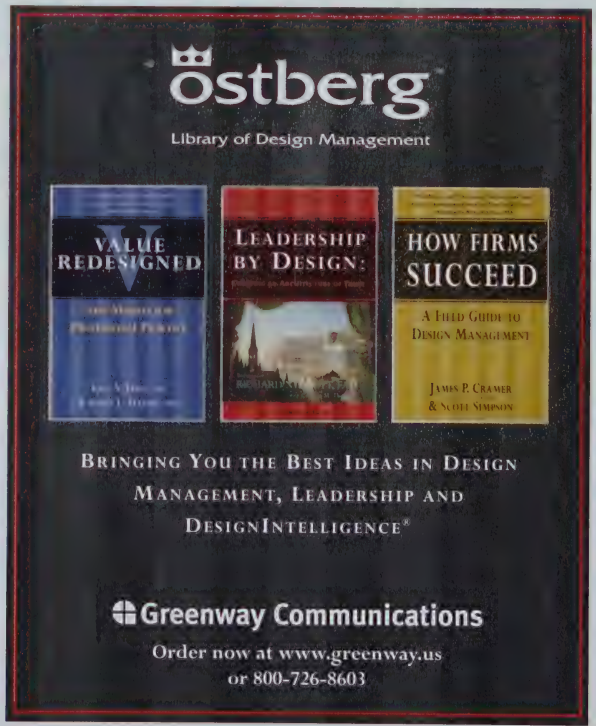
James McCown is director of communications and marketing for Schwartz/Silver Architects in Boston and writes regularly for the *Boston Globe*, *Boston* magazine and *Art New England*.



ORIGINS OF ARCHITECTURAL PLEASURE
by Grant Hildebrand
University of California Press, 1999
Reviewed by Kira L. Gould, Assoc. AIA

Why do we find pleasure in certain buildings? Grant Hildebrand, a professor of architecture and art history at the University of Washington, suggests that people prefer certain forms in architecture because of survival instincts, naturally selected over time, and because





their ancestors for centuries were responding to an environment made up of almost entirely natural material.

The human impulse toward survival behaviors, he suggests, is innately linked to a specific set of characteristics; designed environments that have these are likely to elicit human pleasure. He then uses three pairs of words — refuge and prospect, enticement and peril, order and complexity — as his framework. Survival requires ingestion, procreation, securing habitation, and exploration, he notes, and the latter two have architectural implications.

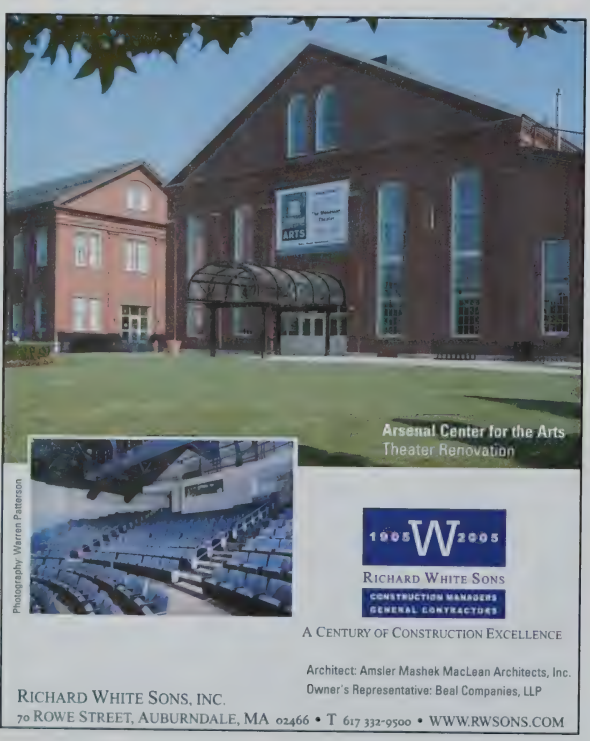
Humans are drawn to places of refuge (think nesting urges) but also desire places of prospect — well lit with long views, often including water. Hildebrand notes a positive "nested hierarchy" of prospect and refuge in Frank Lloyd Wright's refuge-dominant houses and describes a Mario Botta dwelling as "in balance," while Corbu's Villa Savoye is "prospect dominant." Enticement and peril relate to the human impulse of exploration. Humans are curious thrill-seekers, which explains why perilous architecture, such as Fallingwater, and towers such as Mont-Saint-Michel, appeal. As an example of the third characteristic, order and complexity, Hildebrand cites Louis Kahn's Exeter library, where the crisp, central volume contrasts with intimate study nodes.

Hildebrand suggests that both order and complexity must be made known. This calls into question works such as Mies van der Rohe's Seagram building, whose salient features are hidden to the casual observer (or visible only in a drawing of a corner detail). Perhaps such hidden messages can be blamed for other architecture that Hildebrand might describe as out of balance (where complexity lacks order or order lacks complexity).

Hildebrand's prose is thoughtful and readable, although sometimes dry. He illustrates how the three pairings appear to have stemmed from evolutionary development and how they can be seen in various forms of architecture, but the leap to the notion of architectural pleasure is a bit long. One trouble is that pleasure is highly subjective (even if also in some part congenital).

He pines for architecture that can be appreciated by many people. The Laon cathedral towers "represent some quite sophisticated and abstract thinking of their time…. The towers also present characteristics of immediate and visible delight. They have it both ways: they add to one observer's collection at a sophisticated cognitive level, to another's at an immediately apparent affective level." This having-it-both-ways may be a key to long-term success. Architects have complex, nesting scales of responsibility, and one of these is a commitment to honesty, clarity, and accessibility.

Kira L. Gould, Assoc. AIA, writes about design from her home in Boston's South End.



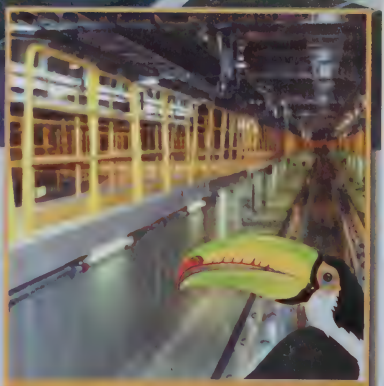


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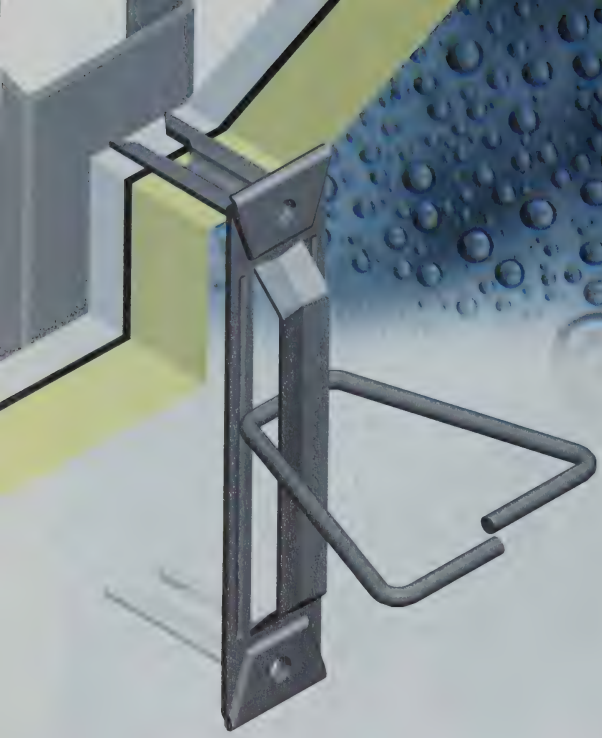
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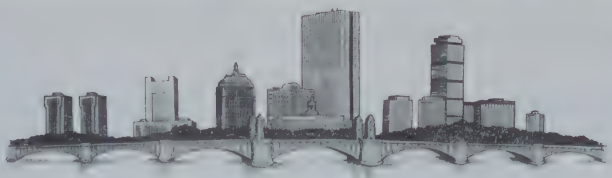
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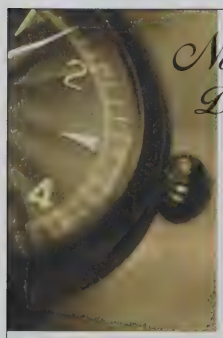
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But there's a place where someone has built stuff to confuse, amuse, and even scare the pants off us. It's Six Flags New England (formerly Riverside Park) in Agawam, Massachusetts. In 1840, it was a picnic grove. Now it's a mega-complex of neon and gasping hydraulics that attracts teenagers from all over New England.

Here, it seems, there are two main forces at work. The first is to separate "guests" from their money by creating an environment that steals a page from the shopping-mall playbook — directing all foot traffic past as many opportunities to spend money as possible. You can't simply wander the park. You have to dodge and weave your way through a pan-sensory assault — past kielbasa concessionaires, around (or just as often through) countless gift shops — with minimal signage to help you reach your intended target.

And that intended target is often the embodiment of Six Flags' other guiding principle: a meticulous exploration of the architecture of fear. There are few jobs that require one to think, *Will this freak people out enough? Am I perhaps being too gentle?*

Rollercoasters, of course, are the most obvious example of this. The first inkling of a rollercoaster, built at Coney Island in 1884, was meant to be nothing more than a mildly amusing diversion, a novel way to take in some lovely ocean views. That was, apparently, fun for about five minutes — within a year, a successor was built in San Francisco that was all about speed, height, and stomach-churning dips.

In 2005, of course, rollercoasters are light-years beyond what early designers could have ever imagined. But despite 100 years of advances, every coaster on Earth is still bound by the laws of both gravity and government, and only one of those laws can be bent. (In recent years, Massachusetts' own Congressman Ed Markey has led the way in attempting to regulate coaster speeds and G forces. He means well, but to my mind, speed and G forces are kind of the whole point.) To the great delight of coaster fans worldwide, Six Flags New England is home to a steel-tube monster that pushes at least the law of gravity right to the edge — "Superman: Ride of Steel," which many aficionados rank among the top 10 anywhere. That New England hosts a world-class coaster is more than a little strange. Such a thing ought to reside in Ohio, say, or California — someplace a bit more accustomed to adrenaline and speed.

Next time you visit Six Flags, spend some time to quietly reflect on Superman as its payload of screaming teens roars by overhead. It's been said that architecture is frozen music. If that's the case, then a rollercoaster like Superman is frozen punk rock: breakneck and hellbent. But I think a more apt description is that coaster tracks are frozen mathematical equations: solve 'em for x and you get white-knuckled horror. They are prime examples of engineers pushing hard against the laws of physics, and the laws of physics pushing hard right back. "This coaster is going to be the craziest one ever built," they brag. "Oh yeah? Build it, and you will die," Mother Nature replies. We can stack skyscraper floors up to the very clouds, anchor oil rigs in the deepest oceans, and send our friends and neighbors into outer space and back, but when it comes to building scream machines, a tyranny of the tracks takes precedence. Here, human frailty is the limiting factor, not material strength or cost of construction. "Scare the living hell out of us," we ask, "but let us survive the trip." Now *that* — pun very much intended — is one tall order. ■

There are few jobs that require one to think, *Will this freak people out enough? Am I perhaps being too gentle?*

Gregory Lauzon is a freelance writer in Western Massachusetts. He was terrified of coasters as a kid, but today he'll ride nearly anything. Nearly.



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